

THE GENERALSHIP OF BELISARIUS

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fulfillment of the requirement for the  
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

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## ABSTRACT

THE GENERALSHIP OF BELISARIUS by MAJ Anthony Brogna, U.S. Army  
107 pages.

This study reviews the campaigns and battles of the Sixth Century A. D. Byzantine General Belisarius, attempting to extract common threads of military thought and principles and providing an analysis as to the application of his method to today's military operations. Belisarius won extraordinary victories on three continents, often fighting against overwhelming odds.

The study reviews the world environment from the perspective of the Eastern Roman Empire along with the major personalities of the age. After a short review of the Eastern Roman Empire's military structure, the study reviews chronologically, and analyzes Belisarius' campaigns against the Persians, the Vandals, and the Ostrogoths.

This study concludes showing that mastership of strategic and tactical thought, deception, psychological warfare, superior technology and training, and elite forces were among the keys of Belisarius success. Finally, these keys of success are related to modern day military operations.

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## PREFACE

Our estimate of personal merit is relative to the common faculties of mankind. The aspiring efforts of genius or virtue, either in active or speculative life, are measured not so much by their real elevation as by the height to which they ascend above the level of their age or country: and the same stature which in a people of giants would pass unnoticed, must appear conspicuous in a race of pygmies. . . . In this view the character of Belisarius may be deservedly placed above the heroes of the ancient republics. His imperfections flowed from the contagion of the times; his virtues were his own, free gift of nature or reflection; he raised himself without a master or a rival; and so inadequate were the arms committed to his hand, that his sole advantage was derived from the pride and presumption of his adversaries. Under his command, the subjects of Justinian often deserved to be called Romans.<sup>1</sup>

Edward Gibbon, Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire

Why does eighteenth century historian Edward Gibbon place the Eastern Roman Empire General Belisarius above all the great commanders of antiquity? What was the nature of Belisarius' service to the Empire, and what were his enduring contributions to the art of war? The thesis of this paper is that Belisarius conducted his military campaigns and engagements with a strategic vision and tactical "modus operandi" that surpassed any other of his time and that a study of his operational art is still relevant. The following pages will recount his campaigns and battles, extracting common threads of military thought and principles and providing an analysis as to the application of his method to today's military operations.

During the analysis that follows, numerous themes will be developed and explored to support the thesis of this paper. These include the personal character and intellect of Belisarius and the relationship of these traits to his use of what Clausewitz terms moral force in his activities as well as the use and advancement of tactics, operations, technology, and training of forces.

The methodology that will be used to develop this thesis will be primarily chronological: the discovery and interpretation of facts along with the search and detailing of causes for effects. The following analysis flows from the macro to the particular; first the strategic environment of the Eastern Empire will be explored, followed by the Empires' strategic (geopolitical, economic, and military) aims along with the motivations for these aims. Next, the application of resources toward the achievement of these aims will be examined, along with Belisarius' role in the strategy of the Empire. The Eastern Roman military structure will be reviewed, followed by the campaigns and battles of Belisarius. Finally, a review and analysis of Belisarius' military exploits will be conducted.

To analyze the campaigns and battles of Belisarius, a framework of three different approaches will be used. First, the character of Belisarius will be examined. Throughout this paper, Belisarius will be evaluated in terms of Clausewitz's definition of military genius, primarily focusing on character and intellect. Second, how Belisarius led and affected the Roman military organizations under his command will be analyzed.

Finally, the techniques Belisarius employed on the battlefield and in theaters of operation will be examined.

To support the above methodology and framework, the organization of this paper is as follows: chapter one establishes the state of the sixth century world and the status and aims of the Empire; it also introduces the background of major personalities of the time. Chapter two is a short study of the Eastern Roman military structure, while chapters three through five review and analyze the various campaigns and battles. Finally, chapter six will attempt to tie together all previous chapters, provide analysis, and draw a set of conclusions based on the thesis of this paper.

For the researcher examining the Empire in the sixth century along with the activities of Belisarius, the primary source of information is the History of the Wars by Procopius of Caesarea. Procopius was Belisarius' classically trained, learned secretary who accompanied Belisarius during his campaigns and provided detailed accounts from personal observation. Although Procopius presents a first-hand narration of events, to quote the historian Hans Delbruck, ". . . Procopius feels obliged, according to his degree of insight, to create relationships and present pictures, . . . as highly as his work is to be valued, he still may be used as a source only with extreme care and prudence."<sup>2</sup> As will be shown, Procopius had strong personal feelings about the personalities he was writing about. However, in the final analysis, what Procopius presents as facts have generally been verified by other sources. The researcher has

numerous scholars available who have filtered Procopius' writings and have cross referenced them with other sources of the sixth century (e.g., the Byzantine historian Agathias, the Digest of Justinian, etc).

The challenge in researching a thesis on Belisarius is not of an archaeological nature, but rather the synthesizing of the voluminous secondary source material available before beginning a military analysis of the era. No known treatise exists that is dedicated solely to analyzing the military aspects of Belisarius' campaigns. Edward Gibbon in the 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire' dedicates more than one-hundred pages to the campaigns of Belisarius, while numerous other, more modern scholars such as Dr. Glanville Downey and Robert Graves, provide expanded insight into the period and Belisarius' activities.

Two final points should be illustrated to assist in establishing the period of civilization covered in this paper. First, throughout this paper the term "Roman" will be used instead of Byzantine. The Byzantine period, as perceived by the twentieth century, did not begin until after the reign of Justinian. The Empire's leaders and citizens still considered themselves Romans (Procopius uses the term Roman, not Byzantine when referring to the people of the Eastern Empire) as did other states and peoples who also referred to them as Romans (along with all the connotations that went along with that name). Secondly, historians bracket the end of antiquity somewhere between August 9, 378 A.D., when the Emperor Valens and 40,000 legionaries were destroyed by the Goths at Adrianople in southern

Greece (which sealed the fate of the western Empire), and the death of the Emperor Justinian in 565 A.D. This latter date is sometimes used for two reasons. First, Justinian closed the Academy at Constantinople that had been founded by Plato in 387 B.C., because he considered it a center of pagan philosophy. Second, Justinian ended the 1,050-year-old Roman practice of appointing Consuls to office. Justinian considered the practice only ceremonial and a needless expense since all political power rested with the Emperor. As such, this paper examines a period of transition, the cusp between antiquity and the medieval. As will be later discussed, it is also the transition between age of the primacy of infantry and the rise in importance of cavalry.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE WORLD OF THE SIXTH CENTURY EASTERN ROMAN EMPIRE

Ruling as we do over our Empire, which God has entrusted to us, by His divine authority, we know both the triumphs of war and the adornments of peace: we bear up the framework of the state; and we so lift up our hearts in contemplation of the support given to us by the Lord Omnipotent that we put not our trust in our own arms, nor in those of our soldiers, nor in our leaders in war, nor in our skill; rather do we rest our hopes in the providence of the Supreme Trinity, from whence proceeded the elements of the whole universe and their disposition throughout the world.<sup>3</sup>

Justinian, His Sacred Majesty the Emperor of the Eastern Romans, Digest

An Imperial Army officer in Constantinople during late August 527 A.D., present for the ascension of Justinian as sole Emperor of the Roman Empire, contemplating the future of his Empire while the summer moon shimmered offshore in the Sea of Marmara, would have been filled with conflicting emotions: pride at the continuing sanctity and security of the 500-year-old institution of Roman Emperor, hope that always accompanies a new head of state, and yet, frustration for the state of the Empire. For everywhere the officer looked, there was an amalgam of contradictions, missed opportunities, and leaders interested in only self aggrandizement. This lack of Roman virtue threatened the survival of the Eastern Empire and stood in the way of fulfilling the dream that was in the heart of every true Roman:

the reestablishment of the Western Empire, free of barbarian influence, under a true Roman Emperor.

By the sixth century, Constantinople was the heart of the Eastern Empire and the greatest city of its time. It was a city designed in the classical style, with great structures, such as the Forum of Constantine, the great wall of Theodosius II that protected the city, and the Imperial Palace complex, housing the best soldiers of the Empire, the Imperial Guard. The city had a population of about 600,000 citizens who were a mixture of all races: Greeks, Italians, Arabs, Goths, and Huns among others. All that was required for citizenship was the ability to speak Greek and the assumption of the Orthodox faith. The center of the Eastern Empire was founded on the former Greek colonies of Byzantium; the culture and population retained much of this heritage. Citizens received free bread, circuses, and medical care courtesy of the Emperor. The benefits of citizenship were as great as any in the world.

Yet there was a cancer festering in the city; that cancer was known as the Blues and the Greens. The Blues and Greens were two political/para-military factions who truly ruled the city and whom the Emperor had to appease constantly. Nearly everyone in the city belonged to either the Blues or the Greens; the majority of the populace of Constantinople wore a blue or green sash signifying particular allegiance. The Blues and the Greens traced their roots to old Rome where they were formed to provide racing teams for the circus. By the time of Justinian they exerted more influence over the city than the Emperor, people

owing their allegiance to their faction first and the Emperor second. Factional bands roamed the city and killed members of other factions on a daily basis. By the time of the accession of Justinian, these two factions had moved to robbing shopkeepers and killing innocent citizens while the constabulary of the city had taken refuge in police stations, too scared to intervene. At first, Justinian would skillfully play one faction against the other. Later both factions would unite in an attempt to overthrow Justinian in what history would call the Nika Revolt (which will be covered in chapter four).

Potential enemies surrounded the Empire. To the east were the Persians, whom the Romans had not beaten in battle for generations. The Persians had no desire to destroy the Empire; they considered themselves and the Romans the "Twin Eyes of the World."<sup>4</sup> The Romans held the barbarians in the west from incursions on the Persian Empire (as the Persians guarded the east). Additionally, the Romans were a source of great trade and the leaders of both empires were on friendly terms. Both used each other as a source of intelligence and for assistance in internal court intrigues. The Persians and the Romans had intricate and effective networks of agents and could also provide refuge for Imperial protégés. Also, the Persians could make raids into Roman territory to placate the bloodlust and greed of their subjects and allies. These raids could be made with impudence, since no Roman Army had defeated them on the field of battle.

To the north were various tribes of Huns; some allied to the Romans, some allied to the Persians, most allied to whatever profited them best at the moment. Fortunately, the tribes of Huns were rarely united. As long as they were not, they posed only a nuisance with their constant raids. To the south, in territory that was within the Empire, the hold on Egypt was tenuous at best owing to religious unrest based on the heresy of Monophysitism. Monophysitism maintained that Jesus had a single nature that was wholly divine. To the west were the barbarians that had conquered the Western Empire; the Vandals, who, through personal examples, provides the modern term "vandalize." They occupied North Africa and as pirates terrorized shipping in the Mediterranean. Also there was the Ostrogoths ("Easterngoths") who ruled Italy and the Visigoths ("Highgoths") who controlled Spain and whose cavalries were responsible for the defeat of the Emperor Valens at Adrianople. Although these three peoples recognized the Emperor as the titular monarch of the entire Empire, West and East, they pledged only token allegiance to him and had taken to Christianity in name only. Their ancestors had been in awe of the Empire; their offspring now claimed to be inheritors of that Empire and kept certain, figurehead institutions alive to provide a modicum of legitimacy to their realm. Numerous other barbaric races inhabited the west: the Gepids, Slavs, Bulgars, Franks, and Burgandians, each a threat to the interests of the Empire.

Despite the challenges and threats, the officer that contemplated the frustrations of the Empire that day knew that

the "soul" of the Empire had three unique components. Each component made the Empire vastly superior to any other state in the Western World. The first component was Roman tradition of law, government, and the army; a Roman tradition that provided the basis for successful and enlightened rule of Western civilization for centuries. The second component was the Hellenistic tradition of unequaled human achievements in art, education, and philosophy. The final component was, of course, Christianity, which permeated all levels and activities of the state.

Someone of the twentieth century would have difficulty fathoming the importance of religious orthodoxy in the life of the Empire. Most of the energies of the Empire, from the emperor to the average citizen, were dedicated to the service, study, and purification of orthodox teaching. Wars, executions, and major political rifts within the Empire were due to the interpretation of the orthodoxy. Numerous heresies existed that required the Emperor's attention: Monophysitism (particularly prevalent in the southern areas of the Empire); the Nestorian heresy, which believed Jesus was a man who was possessed by a divine spirit to accomplish a divine purpose; and the Aryan heresy. What was most important, however, was that the Emperor had sole responsibility to crush these heresies. The strategy the Emperor used to crush these heresies was critical. Squashing Monophysitism in Egypt could require a major military operation as well as the stationing of precious troops in the south for many years. Although the Pope in Rome and the people in Constantinople would

be satisfied, the borders would be less protected and the treasury (which was always in a tenuous state) would bear a major burden. If the Emperor tried to placate the Monophysites, he would face trouble from the west and possible overthrow by the citizens of Constantinople.<sup>5</sup>

An officer contemplating the future under the new Emperor probably felt that the best that could be hoped for was that the Emperor could hold the status quo while improving one attribute of the Empire. A recent Emperor Anastasius I had been fondly remembered for holding the frontiers of the Empire while simultaneously reducing taxes and increasing the wealth of the treasury. What would be the legacy of this new Emperor Justinian?

Flavius Petrus Sabgatius Justianus, now known as Justinian, was born in 483 A.D. in Illyria (modern day former Yugoslavia) and was educated in Constantinople. He attached himself in the service of his uncle, Justin. Though born a peasant, Justin rose through military service to the Empire to Commander of the Palace Guard. When Anastasius I died with no heirs, Justin was in a position to claim the throne for himself. Justin though illiterate, made full use of his well educated and intelligent nephew, Justinian, in running the affairs of the Empire. One of Justinian's tasks was to guide his uncle's hand across a silver stencil, allowing the illiterate Emperor to sign Imperial documents Justin could not read. This allowed Justinian, as the heir apparent, a nine-year apprenticeship

before becoming Emperor; experience and time to fully develop his own plans for the future.

When Justinian, a man of enormous energy who would earn the moniker "the Emperor who never sleeps," later accepted the royal diadem, he had specific designs for renewal of the Empire. More importantly, he had designs to secure his place in history alongside Augustus Caesar and Constantine. To achieve the greatness he desired, Justinian would concentrate on four goals: (1) the reconquest of the West; (2) the purification of the orthodoxy; (3) codification of law; and (4) a massive building program to make Constantinople the greatest city of the world for ages to come.<sup>6</sup>

Most of Justinian's daily activities were dedicated to religious issues; he delighted in leading ecclesiastical arguments with the Patriarch and Bishops of the Empire. Through Justinian's war on heresies, numerous ecclesiastical councils, and liaisons with the Pope, Justinian could look back on his death bed with satisfaction on his accomplishments in cleansing the orthodoxy and unifying it with the life of the Empire.

In 528, Justinian established a commission under the Imperial lawyer Tribonian with the task of codifying Roman Law. Up until this point, tens of thousands of volumes existed concerning jurisprudence; the outcome of a citizen's day in court depended on what volume of the law the judge had that day. By the time of Justinian's death in 565, the Corpus Juris Civilis, the product of Tribonian's commission that contained all Imperial law, along with associated legal opinions, became the singular

legal source for the Empire. All previous laws and edicts not contained within the *Corpus Juris Civilis* were repealed. The *Corpus Juris Civilis* forms the nucleus of western law in use today. In Michael H. Hart's The 100, listing the 100 most influential persons in history,<sup>7</sup> Justinian ranks 96th primarily for his codification of law.

Justinian's grandiose building plans for Constantinople and the Empire was assisted by earthquake, general insurrection, skilled architects and artisans, and sufficient treasure. Procopius (to get in the Emperor's favor) dedicates a volume of his works to the magnificent Imperial buildings of Justinian. Today, the former Saint Sophia stands in Istanbul as a lasting monument to the reign of Justinian.

One other major achievement of Justinian's reign, an important by-product of the Empire's extensive espionage network, was the discovery of the secret of silk. Up until Justinian's time, silk was imported from China. The Romans believed a special plant in China was the source. Silk passed through Persia, where a heavy tariff was levied. Finally it arrived in the Empire where it was in great demand. Justinian's spies smuggled the needed species of caterpillars out of China back to the Empire, where a thriving silk industry was established. The fruits of this achievement were a major economic boon to the Empire and a major economic loss for the Persians.

The reconquest of the West, as viewed by an Imperial officer in the summer of 527 A.D., appeared beyond the skills of the Army's soldiers and leaders. Justinian would indeed have to

rest his hopes of reconquest "in the divine providence of the Supreme Trinity." First, the Persian threat would in some way have to be dealt with before the Empire's eyes could turn west. A shift of forces west would offer the Persians too inviting an opportunity on the Empire's Eastern frontier where skirmishes with the Persians had been ongoing since the reign of Justin. Second, the people of the Empire would not support western military adventure. The current borders of the Empire (in nearly every direction) were unsecured, taxes were already considered too high, and moneys needed for a major operation in the west, which would be on top of the new taxes needed to support Justinian's building program, would not be tolerated. Again, the capital was in near chaos due to factional struggles. Finally, previous military expeditions westward had met with disaster. For example, in 467 an Eastern Empire fleet of 1,100 ships and 100,000 men was defeated by the Vandals.<sup>8</sup> Yet in the end, Justinian's faith in providence would be justified. The Persians would be subdued and the citizen's support gained through events beyond the detailed planning of the Emperor and his court.

Before leaving the subject of Justinian, it should be pointed out that Justinian was hated and despised by the citizens of the Empire, and upon his death there was great rejoicing by the public. To achieve his goals Justinian was absolutely ruthless. He appointed the basest characters available as important officials of the Empire. Most were criminals he pardoned for the sole purpose as serving as key officials. One can infer several reasons for this: First, these officials would

not be hampered by any form of morality in achieving Justinian's goals; secondly, unlike a patrician, they could be easily disposed of without alienating influential families; and finally, their past record disqualified them from becoming rivals for the throne. Additionally, the Emperor engaged the services of the most brutal criminals he could find as tax collectors. Their pay was a percentage of their collection, and they were empowered with absolute authority by the Emperor. The obvious results of this policy did not win over the hearts of his subjects. To Justinian, any means was justified to suit his ends. Procopius, in his scandalizing Secret History which was released after the death of all involved, per his instructions, provides insight into the dark side of Justinian's character. The title of one chapter is "How Justinian Killed a Trillion People." This chapter is a mathematical thesis claiming that since Justinian was responsible for killing several hundred thousand people through war, "legal" means, and not responding to plague and earthquake during his reign, after several dozen hypothetical generations, a trillion lives would not have been born that should have been. Another telling chapter is titled "Proving That Justinian and Theodora Were Actually Fiends in Human Form." At figure one is a reproduction of a mosaic containing the likeness of Justinian.

Justinian did have a passion outside his quest for greatness, and that was for the remarkable Empress Theodora. Theodora must be mentioned, as she co-ruled with Justinian and was a trusted and wise counsel. Also utterly ruthless, her

personal leadership and management of state affairs were instrumental to Justinian not only achieving his goals but retaining his throne. Prior to marrying Justinian, she was a well-known prostitute. (Procopius: "In every city of the Empire plying her trade as if the Devil were determined that there be no land on Earth that should not know the sins of Theodora.")<sup>9</sup> Justinian, infatuated with her, had Roman law waived (again, the ends justified the means) to allow him to marry beneath his class. Yet, it was a wise choice for him, as Theodora transformed completely to the demeanor expected of an Empress and provided great service to her husband.

For an officer frustrated with the sixth century state of affairs of the Empire, the great "what if" of recent Roman history was the battle of Adrianople in 378, over which loss Saint Jerome lamented "the end of all humanity, the end of the world."<sup>10</sup> Citizens of the Empire had their own theories why this battle, in which Roman legions were destroyed by barbarian cavalry, and which opened the gates of the west to the barbarians, was lost. One young rising military star of the Empire not only understood the lesson of Adrianople, but had the vision to apply the lesson for the benefit of the Empire. He understood that Adrianople was lost because the Roman legionnaire, on foot and armed with the short sword and javelin, was no match for a force of highly trained archers and heavy cavalry armed with the lance. The old legion lacked the mobility and the ability to skirmish and then make a quick transition to a shock attack of overwhelming force. His vision, adapted from the

Persian, was to add the bow and arrow (of a size that would outrange any enemy's bow and be of sufficient power to pierce any known armor) to the inventory of weapons of the heavy cavalrymen, cover both horse and rider with armor capable of withstanding any known enemy archery, and train this force to the standard of the best of the old legions. This vision belonged to the rising star who was Belisarius.

Belisarius was born approximately 505 A.D. in Germania, Illyria, probably of mostly Slavic stock. Belisarius is Slavic for "White Prince" and he would be seen in future years conversing with Slav allies in their native tongues. Nothing is known about the youth and schooling of Belisarius except that he was probably the son of some minor land owner<sup>11</sup> who had some connections with Justin. Upon reaching the appropriate age he entered the Empire's Imperial cadet schooling system.

Upon graduation from cadet school, he was posted to the Imperial Guard of the Emperor Justin in Constantinople, where he apparently impressed both Justin and Justinian with his character and loyalty. Convincing Justin of his vision for a new heavy cavalry for the Empire, he was allowed to form and train a detachment<sup>12</sup> of improved heavy cavalry, or "cataphracti" (which is Greek for "covered over"). Belisarius' design was the continuation of trends in the development of cavalry since Adrianople. To quote Fauber:

There had been an evolution over the centuries for Belisarius to have the elements on hand for his "invention." The cataphracti therefore came to represent a "chef d'oeuvre" of Greek military technique.<sup>13</sup>

Procopius begins the story of Belisarius early in the History of the Wars, when he explains two Roman officers, Belisarius and Sittas, "both youths and wearing their first beards,"<sup>14</sup> come to the attention of the Emperor. Both had been conducting successful raids into Persian held Armenia. Because of the success of these raids, the Emperor appointed Belisarius as commander of the city of Daras on the Persian frontier.

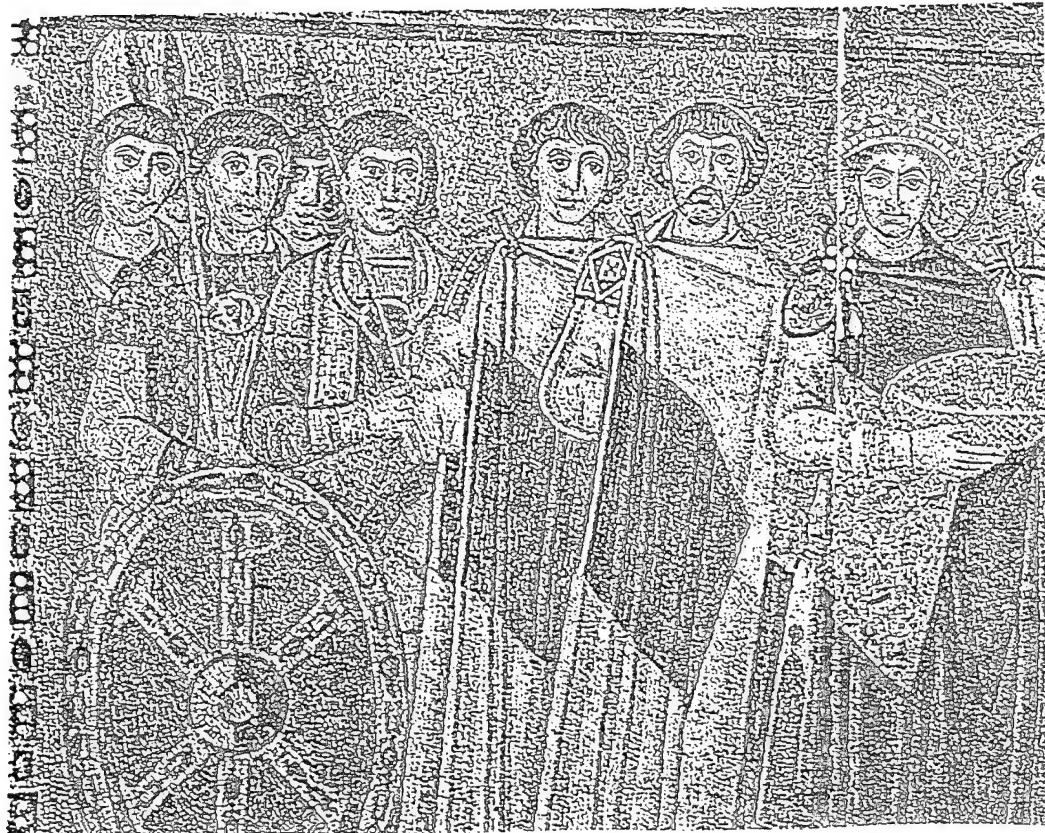


Fig. 1. Mosaic of Justinian (right); Belisarius is considered to be on the Emperor's right (the true likeness of Belisarius is not known with full certainty). Reprinted from Antony Bridge, Theodora, Portrait in a Byzantine Landscape, (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1993), 77.

Before closing, Belisarius' wife Antonina, who had a substantial impact in the life of her husband, must be mentioned. Procopius considers Antonina's immorality second only to Theodora's. In the case of Antonina, marriage did not reform her personality, if anything it increased her desires. Antonina and Theodora were good friends and Antonina, through Theodora, could influence Justinian more than Belisarius. Yet despite Antonina's constant indiscretions, Belisarius continued to love her, or at least kept true to his wedding vows. This devotion and adherence to his word once given, to both Justinian and Antonina, despite their depravations against him, led Gibbon to say about Belisarius: "the unconquerable patience and loyalty of Belisarius appear either below or above the character of a man."<sup>15</sup> Although Antonina would accompany Belisarius on his campaigns, and would cause occasional trouble with some of Belisarius officers, she had little impact concerning the thesis of this paper.

To the Imperial officer that was present for the ascension of Justinian as Emperor, it was a time of challenge and hope. One mistake by a senior leader of the Empire, either Emperor or general, could threaten the existence of the Empire. Yet, with the right leadership, the Empire could achieve much. In the next chapter, the military system that a sixth century Roman officer belonged to will be examined.

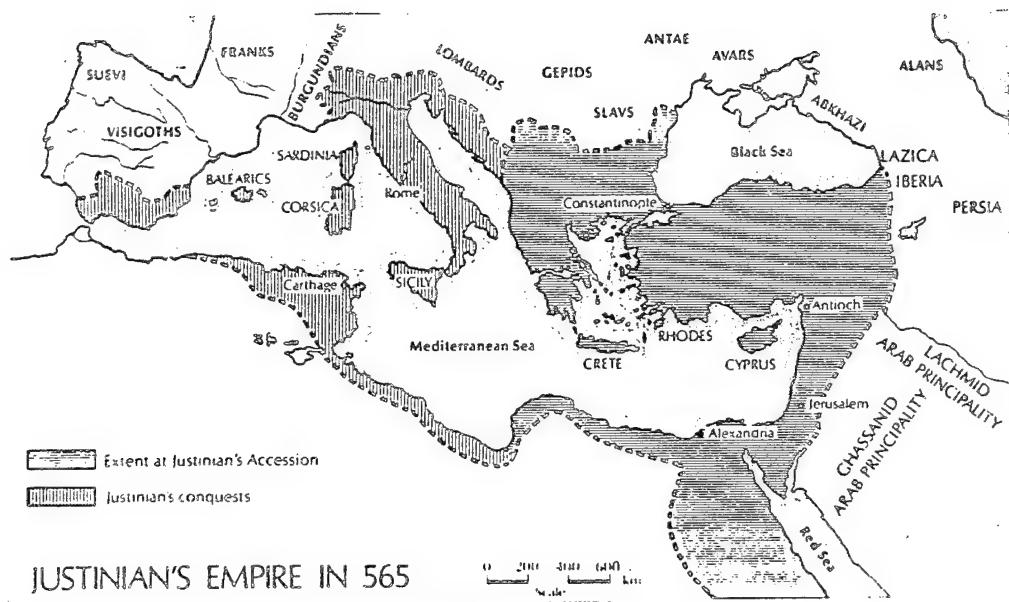


Fig. 2. Map of the Eastern Roman Empire at the end of Justinian's reign. Reprinted from Robert Browning, Justinian and Theodora, (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1971), 23

CHAPTER 2  
THE EASTERN ROMAN EMPIRE'S MILITARY SYSTEM  
OF THE SIXTH CENTURY

The armies of Rome had conquered her Empire through stern discipline and drill. The victories of the East Roman Empire were won by studied strategy and generalship . . . here alone in Europe were the principles of strategy and tactics actually studied.<sup>16</sup>

Lawrence Fauber, Narses, Hammer of the Goths

This chapter will briefly review the Eastern Roman Army of the sixth century. First the structure and size of the army will be discussed. Next, the character of the army will be evaluated. Finally, the challenges facing a Roman general of the sixth century will be considered.

The Roman army of the sixth century bore no resemblance to the old Roman legionary army. The old Roman army was an infantry force, whereas the Eastern Roman army of the sixth century existed at the beginning of the age of cavalry. Since cavalry was the arm of decision, the Eastern Roman army's key formations for battle were cavalry.

The Eastern Roman army had two major divisions, the limitanei, who were static, often part-time troops stationed at a specific fortress on the frontier, and the federate and stratiotai, which formed the basic field, mobile armies. The federate were primarily light cavalry and were composed mostly of

mercenary barbarians, although a number of Roman citizens served in this formation. The federate were officered and commanded by Romans. The stratiotai was the Roman infantry, whose makeup was the same as the federate. The primary purposes of infantry in the sixth century Roman army included the holding of fortresses, employment as archers, use as laborers during seiges, and placement on the battlefield to force opposing cavalry to maneuver in accordance with the Roman commander's will.

Other formations were important parts of a Roman field army. The first were the allies, such as Huns, Heruls (from Scandinavia),<sup>17</sup> and Arabs who all served in formations native to their national origin and under native commanders. These barbarian mercenary cavalry formations received no training from the Empire. Each brought their own particular talents and weaknesses to the battlefield. Another important formation was the private retainers of key leaders in the army. For Belisarius, they were known as his Household Cavalry which in his case would grow to more than 7,000 in strength. These private retainers were paid, trained, and equipped by their master; they swore two oaths of allegiance, one to their master and the other to the Emperor. The private retainers were handpicked and often were the best troops on the battlefield. Additionally, other formations could be found in the field army, such as pure Roman heavy cavalry. These cataphracti tended to be less well equipped and trained than the cataphracti of private retainers.<sup>18</sup>

The size of the Eastern Roman Army was approximately 150,000 (including static frontier troops), with an army in the

field numbering between 15,000 and up to a rare size of 40,000.<sup>19</sup> However, to fully secure all the frontiers, it is calculated that the Empire needed a force numbering 645,000,<sup>20</sup> which was well beyond the treasure of the Empire. In support of the army, the Empire owned and operated the armaments industry and managed an Imperial military schooling system.

Money was a major constraint on the military. Not only was the cost of major expeditions usually prohibitive, but, as shown above, the expense of a standing army to protect all the frontiers exceeded the Imperial treasure. Major costs included the payment of allies and mercenaries, logistical support, the equipment (armor, weapons, horses, etc.) and pay required for the Roman soldier. To quote Downey:

The available resources did not make it possible to raise larger army, and the government now had established a policy of dealing with the barbarians by diplomatic means whenever possible. Money payments in the form of subsidies or annual tribute were often considered preferable to war. Because of its small size, and the expense of operation, the army was employed only as an extension of diplomatic action, and generals always had to avoid losses as much as possible.<sup>21</sup>

The mercenary character of a large portion of the Eastern Roman army posed unique challenges for the commander. The commander had to ensure that allies and mercenaries were paid on time. The commander needed to have a feel for the customs and desires of the different races under his command to ensure they remained loyal and motivated. Also, each of the allies had unique limitations and talents that the commander had to understand in order to employ them to their full potential on the battlefield. The Huns were aggressive and could act

independently on the battlefield, but wore no armor, the Heruls could serve as superb scouts, etc. Like a chessmaster, the commander needed to understand the potentialities of each formation and maneuver them correctly.

The officer corps, as in old Rome, could present the commander with difficulties. An Imperial officer with political connections and a personal agenda could not always be trusted to follow the commander's intent. Concerning the mercenary nature of the army and the officer corps, Llewellyn states:

Weakness lay in indiscipline, among the mercenary troops and junior commanders alike. The troops, fighting for pay always in arrears in a country totally foreign to them, could seldom be trusted to forgo the hope of plunder . . . . Closely controlled they were of excellent quality; when pressure relaxed they rapidly declined. The officers, gallant and intelligent under direct command, were prone to mutual jealousy, intrigue and avarice which weakened their combined efforts--even under Belisarius they could at times jeopardize the position by rash action, disobedience or inertia . . . there was real difficulty in finding generals of the caliber necessary to coordinate the widespread detachments.<sup>22</sup>

Based on the preceding paragraphs, one can easily grasp the difficult challenges facing the commander of an Eastern Roman field army. Inadequate forces, limits on cost, varied nationalities and capabilities, the problems of controlling mercenaries, and a somewhat rebellious officer corps are just a few of the complexities a commander had to handle.

The difficulties facing both the Empire and a commander led the sixth century Eastern Romans to their own definitions of strategy and tactics. In regard to strategy, below are those definitions contrasted to their modern counterparts.

Roman:

"Strategy is the means by which a commander may defend his own lands and defeat his enemies. The general is the one who practices strategy."<sup>23</sup>

Clausewitz:

"Strategy is the use of engagements for the object of the war."<sup>24</sup>

FM 100-5:

"Strategy is the art and science of employing the armed forces and other elements of national power during peace, conflict and war to secure national security objectives."<sup>25</sup>

As for tactics:

Roman:

"Tactics is a science which enables one to organize and maneuver a body of armed men in an orderly manner. Tactics may be divided into four parts: proper organization of men for combat; distribution of weapons according to the needs of each man; movement of an armed body of troops in a manner appropriate to the occasion; the management of war, personnel and materials, including an examination of ways and causes as well as of what is advantageous."<sup>26</sup>

Clausewitz:

"Tactics is the use of armed forces in the engagement."<sup>27</sup>

FM 100-5:

"Tactics are the art and science of employing available means to win battles and engagements."<sup>28</sup>

There are numerous factors to consider in the differences between the definitions of the Romans and more modern authors. First, in regard to strategy, the Empire had active enemies on every frontier. Whenever offensive action was taken on one front, the Emperor had to ensure the rest of the frontiers were secure and did not offer an inviting target to neighbors. The key factor was the limited size of the Roman army. Unlike the

more modern definitions of strategy, frontier defense was a primary concern in every military activity. Tactically, the commander in the sixth century had to think beyond the engagement. Organizational management and logistics had to be mastered before even reaching the engagement. As shown above, all warfare was coalition warfare; citizens of the Empire were a mixture of nationalities and additionally, all major operations included numerous allied detachments. The commander had to blend his troops into a cohesive fighting force. Also, when operations occurred at a particular point on the frontier, a commander would usually draft local males, thus their equipping and training was a concern. In the modern era, the commander usually receives a trained, homogenous force to lead into battle.

The challenges of sixth century Roman generalship required a leader with unique and varied competencies. A successful commander needed diplomatic, organizational, and technical skills in addition to martial abilities to succeed on the battlefield. The next chapter, where Belisarius first assumes the mantle of general, will review and evaluate Belisarius' performance.

## CHAPTER 3

### FIRST PERSIAN WAR

As soon as Justinian came into power he turned everything upside down. Whatever had been forbidden by law he now introduced into the government, while he revoked all established custom: as if he had been given the robes of an Emperor on the condition he would turn everything topsy-turvy.<sup>29</sup>

Procopius, History of the Wars

Disorder and disobedience were the common malady of the times: the genius to command and the virtue to obey resided only in the mind of Belisarius.<sup>30</sup>

Edward Gibbon, Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire

This chapter will recount Belisarius' first battles against the Persians while serving as a general of the Empire on the Persian frontier. Also, this chapter will analyze Belisarius' tactics and leadership on the battlefield.

The summer of 528 found Belisarius serving on the Persian frontier as commander of the city and troops of Daras. Roman and Persian skirmishing and raiding against each other continued as it had since the time of Justin. This particular border war with the Persians began in 527, and the service of Belisarius would be instrumental in ending it.

Accompanying Belisarius were his cataphracti, his personal bodyguard and troop, the Household Cavalry. As a general and man of increasing wealth, Belisarius was allowed and

able to afford his own detachment. Made up of warriors handpicked by Belisarius, they served not only as the rock of Belisarius' forces in any battle, but would also be used to train and steady new allied forces during campaigns.

Justinian had kept up the pressure on the Persian front, with the strategic intent of ending that military threat and securing the frontier through diplomatic means. However, to negotiate successfully,



Fig. 3. Map of the Roman and Persian Frontier. Reprinted from John Norwich, Byzantium, The Early Centuries, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), maps.

he would have to be in a position of military equality with the Persians. Based on history, the Persians considered the Romans a

second rate military force and Justinian would need a victory, or at least a tactical stalemate to force the Persians to negotiate. A peace treaty with Persia would then allow Justinian to turn his attention westward.

Justinian, seeking to stir up events in order to develop the situation, ordered Belisarius, trained during his cadet years in engineering,<sup>31</sup> to build a fortress on the boundary of the frontier to protect the cities of Daras and Nisibis. This action would require a direct response from the Persians lest they lose prestige among the cities of the frontier. It could perhaps provide an opening that would allow a tactical victory. As expected, the Persians sent a force to destroy the construction of the fortress. Justinian ordered the forces of two other Roman Generals, Coutzes and Bouzes, to intercept and destroy the Persians. Belisarius and his soldiers were placed under these generals' command. This Roman force was slaughtered by the Persians who also tore down the fortress. After the battle, Belisarius and his forces escaped back to Daras.

After the ignominious defeat of Roman forces, Justinian appointed Belisarius, then approximately 25-years-old General of the East with orders to conduct operations against the Persians. The emperor's intent was to regain the upper hand in frontier negotiations. Why did he choose Belisarius? First, he was the only senior leader available on the Persian frontier whose reputation was not tarnished in some way. Second, based on the years spent together at the palace in Constantinople, he saw in his protégé the natural and loyal military commander he needed to

even consider reconquest of the West. Justinian, as he always would, hedged his bet on Belisarius. The Emperor appointed



Fig. 4. Persian Heavy Cavalryman. Reprinted from: V. Vuksic and Z. Grbasic, Cavalry, The History of a Fighting Elite, (London: Cassell Publishing, 1993), 53.

Hermongenes, then serving as the Emperor's Master of Offices, to serve as aid and advisor to the young Belisarius. The much older Hermongenes was an experienced, former senior officer of the

Empire. Although posted to Belisarius to provide advice if warranted, it appears his real purpose was to spy on the abilities and trustworthiness of the young General. Whatever the reason, both seemed to have gotten along well and Hermongenes did not in any way interfere with the plans of Belisarius.<sup>32</sup>

Belisarius did not have long to plan for his operations against his enemy as a Persian force of 40,000 well-trained men were en route to Daras (figure 4 is a modern reproduction of a Persian cavalryman.) Upon gathering intelligence on the coming Persian force, Belisarius was able to scrape up a force of 25,000 (mostly last minute recruits from nearby cities), of which only 3,000 (his Household Cavalry, the Huns, and Heruls) could be counted on.<sup>33</sup> The majority of his 25,000 man force was infantry, and the majority of the infantry was recruits. With only days available, Belisarius had the recruits trained as archers only, with the more experienced infantry taught point defense in the phalanx formation. His Household Cavalry was broken up and distributed among six squadrons of the Empire's ordinary heavy cavalry, who were not personally trained by Belisarius, for the purpose of training them before the battle and steadying them during the battle. Along with Herul cavalry, Belisarius also had two squadrons of Hun light cavalry, tough fighters who were also armed with the bow.

Belisarius considered that the tactical defensive was his best option for the onrushing Persians. Yet, notwithstanding a siege and losing the initiative were not viable options. Belisarius would rarely allow his forces to suffer a siege; he

would only withstand a siege if it was part of a larger tactical plan to weaken his enemy. In the front of Daras, Belisarius began a series of trench works in order to increase his defensive capability, shape the coming battle, and begin his psychological operations on the Persians. This trench work was crisscrossed with numerous bridges that allowed the cavalry to move across, at numerous locations, with ease.

The Persian commander, Perozes,<sup>34</sup> arrayed his forces upon arrival at Daras as shown in figure 5. According to Procopius: "Then for a long time neither side began battle with the other, but the Persians seemed to be wondering at the good order of the Romans, and appeared at a loss what to do. . . ."<sup>35</sup> After some minor skirmishing, a Persian horseman rode offering single combat. A Roman attendant and wrestling coach named Andreas jumped on a horse, charged the Persian and speared him in the chest to the great delight of the Roman formation. Again, another Persian rode out and challenged single combat, and again Andreas charged out of the formation and killed the Persian. Considering the omens, the Persians decided to retire for the day.

The next day, 10,000 Persian reinforcements arrived for Perozes. Belisarius sent a letter to Perozes offering to end the situation through diplomacy:

The first blessing is peace, as is agreed by all men who have even a small share of reason. It follows that if any one should be a destroyer of it, he would be the most responsible not only to those near him but to the whole nation for the troubles that come. The best general, therefore is the one who is able to bring peace from war.<sup>36</sup>

Why did Belisarius send the letter? As a man of high morals and character (as will be shown in the following pages), Belisarius sincerely desired to avoid battle for what could be gained at a negotiating table. Always to seek the moral high

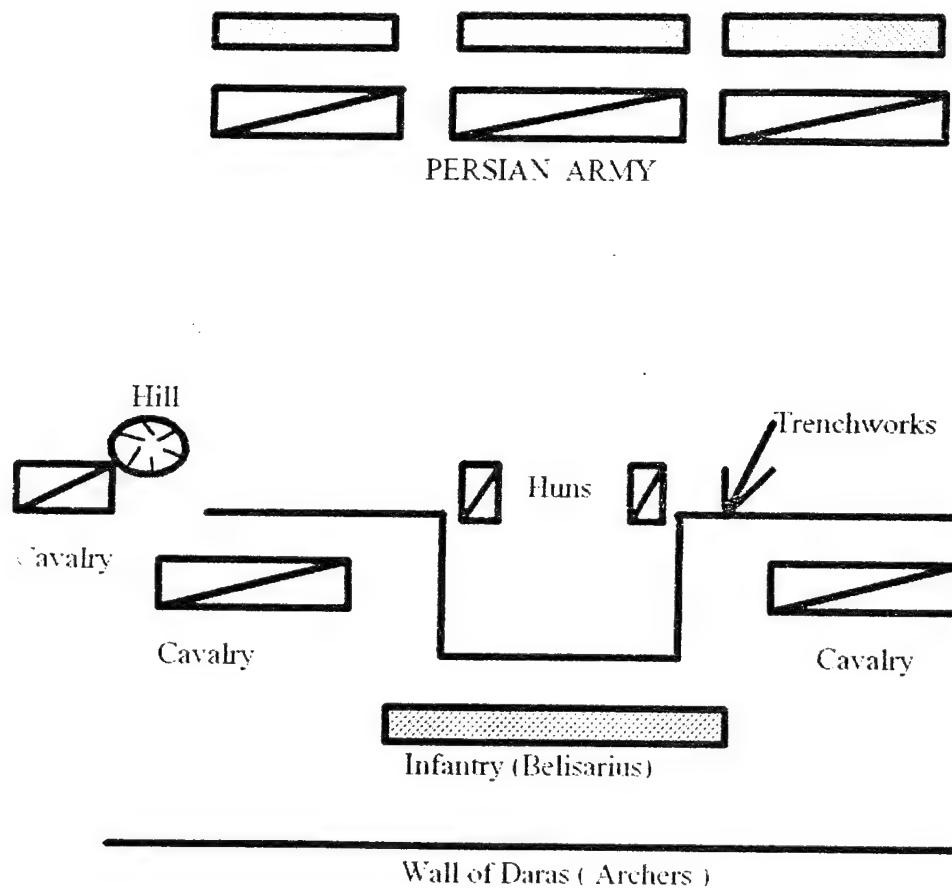


Fig. 5. Dispositions at Daras, July 530 A.D.

ground, for reasons that included his deeply held Orthodox faith, Belisarius would often offer his opponents an "out." He wanted to lead his troops with a clear conscience and ensure that every favorable avenue for peace had been taken to avoid violence. If Perozes interpreted the note as a sign of trepidation over the outcome of the coming battle, so much the better.

Perozes replied that the words were good but they came from Romans who could not be trusted. Anyway, why would Perozes want peace? He was facing an inexperienced "boy" general who had sent a letter suing for peace. They were still the second rate Romans, whom the Persians had easily dispatched last summer, and 10,000 reinforcements had just arrived.

The next day the Persians advanced in the same formation as shown in figure 5. Because Perozes considered the center an obvious trap, he would split his cavalry force and attack both wings simultaneously. Thus, both flanks of the Roman force would collapse and be trapped. Although this is conjecture, the far less mobile Persian infantry were not initially advanced by Perozes due to the large number of Roman archers and the lack of armor on the Persian infantry. If the Roman cavalry scattered the Persian infantry early in the battle, the tide would turn in favor of the Romans. Finally, Perozes would time his attack to just before the time the Romans ate their lunch, the Roman first meal of the day, catching the Romans at their physically weakest.

Perozes' plan of attack was exactly what Belisarius wanted: Perozes would split his cavalry forces and violate the principle of mass. The trench work's center offered the Persians

a deep penetration and a way to split the Romans, yet Perozes feared envelopment by the Romans. With Perozes' plan, as the Persians pushed the Romans back, Belisarius would order withering fire from archers, from both the infantry and on the wall of Daras, against which Persian armor was inadequate. As the Persians charged forward and suffered attrition, Belisarius would extend the battlefield and attack in depth with his light

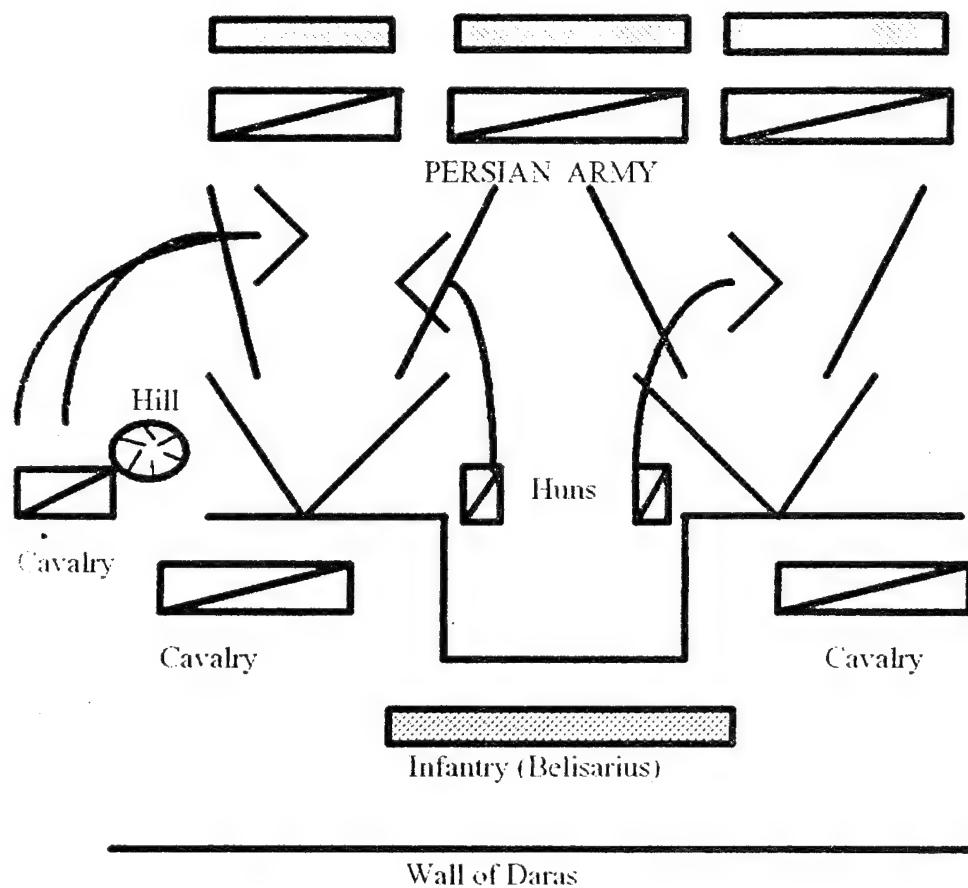


Fig. 6. Persian Attack and Roman Counterattack at Daras

cavalry. The Huns would attack outward from the center of the trench, and the Heruls, not visible to the Persians because of a masking hill, would attack deep on the Persian right flank. Both deep attacks would add psychological shock and surprise to Belisarius' defense.

The battle proceeded as per Belisarius' plan, as shown in figure 6. After exchanging arrow volleys of a short period, for which the Persians got the worst, the Persian cavalry split and attacked both wings simultaneously. Both wings of the Persian attack pushed the Roman cavalry back, but they continued to suffer from Roman arrows. When the Persians had penetrated deep enough and had suffered sufficient casualties, Belisarius released his three deep attacks which sent the Persian cavalry into a state of panic. Fleeing to the rear, the panic spread to the Persian infantry and the entire Persian force fled the battlefield with the Romans in pursuit. Procopius reports that Belisarius:

refused absolutely to let them go farther, fearing lest the Persians through some necessity should turn about and route them while pursuing recklessly, and it seemed to them sufficient to preserve the victory unmarred. For on that day the Persians had been defeated by the Romans, a thing that had not happened for a long time.<sup>37</sup>

From this single battle, one can see the threads of the future modus operandi of Belisarius. First and foremost is the combination of strategic offensive, tactical defensive then tactical offensive. Justinian had stirred events and provoked the Persians (strategic offensive). When the Persians went on

the offensive, Belisarius chose his ground and prepared the battlefield and shaped events according to his own initiative. Belisarius received the initial blows of the Persian army (tactical defensive) until the advantage was with the Romans, then quickly transitioned to the offensive to achieve victory. This modus operandi was better stated centuries later by Clausewitz:

We have already stated what defense is--simply the more effective form of war: a means to win a victory that enables one to take the offensive after superiority has been gained; . . . . Once the defender has gained an important advantage, defense as such has done its work . . . . A sudden powerful transition to the offensive--the flashing of the sword of vengeance--is the greatest moment of the defense. If it is not in the commander's mind from the start . . . he will never be persuaded of the superiority of the defensive form. . . .<sup>38</sup>

Other points of interest for this analysis include Belisarius' turning off the pursuit of the Persians once the objective had been attained. Pursuits of fleeing enemies often run amuck. As the goal of victory switches from a specific objective to annihilation and the plunder of the enemy's camp, control of forces is lost. Belisarius had an axiom to avoid pursuits after the objective had been obtained. As an interesting note, the death knell of the Byzantine Empire was their loss at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, where after achieving their objective, they pursued their enemy recklessly, only to be turned on and defeated in detail.

Also, for this battle, Belisarius remained unmounted with the infantry, directing the battle on foot. Too often in the past, Roman commanders on horse seemed, to the common soldier,

too eager to flee the battle when events got rough. In the future, Belisarius could be found leading attacks or behind his formations directing forces. As will be seen, he would choose his location based on the tactical situation. Tied to this is Belisarius' understanding of the ripple effect panic has through a formation. Often, the side that could induce panic in just one part of an enemy's army, which would spread like wild fire through the force, would be the victor. Belisarius would always take measures to protect his force from panic while attempting, through shock, surprise, and additional psychological operations, to induce fear and panic in the enemy. Finally, this battle, as with the ones to follow, was primarily a cavalry battle, with infantry being used as archers only.

As a result of this battle, the Persians entered into serious negotiations with the Romans for a permanent peace. As negotiations were proceeding, the Persians decided to conduct a major raid into Roman territory in the spring of 531. The object of this raid was the city of Antioch, the second richest city of the Empire. The Persians marched with a force of 30,000 soldiers using a desert route in order to avoid detection. However, Belisarius had set up a series of outposts on the frontier linked by a smoke signaling system. When the Persians were located, Belisarius moved with 22,000 Romans, on interior lines, to intercept the Persians. Belisarius' intention was not to engage the Persian force, but to have them leave peacefully after a Roman demonstration of force.

Belisarius intercepted the Persians on the bank of the Euphrates, opposite the city of Callinicus on 19 April 531. With the Romans blocking their expedition, the Persians planned to retreat to their borders. However, Belisarius' officers and troops, upon hearing their commander's intent of letting the Persians retreat without a fight demanded battle. Belisarius explained that the Roman objective of sending the Persians back had been achieved. Also, the entire Roman force was a day and half into a fast in preparation for Easter and would therefore be physically depleted. Procopius relates Belisarius speech to his soldiers:

Men believe that there is only one victory which is unalloyed, namely to suffer no harm at the hands of the enemy, and this very thing has been given us in the present instance by fortune and by the fear of us that overpowers our foes. Therefore it is better to enjoy the benefit of our present blessings than to seek them when they have passed. For the Persians, led on by many hopes, undertook an expedition against the Romans, and now, with everything lost, they have beaten a hasty retreat. So that if we compel them against their will to abandon their purpose of withdrawing and to come to battle with us, we shall win no advantage whatsoever if we are victorious, - for why should one rout a fugitive? - while if we are unfortunate, as may happen, we shall both be deprived of the victory which we now have, not robbed of it by the enemy, but flinging it away ourselves . . . .<sup>39</sup>

Despite the speech, the army and the officers openly called Belisarius a coward and threatened to revolt and attack without him. Belisarius consented to lead them into battle. However, prior to the battle, Belisarius wrote a letter to Justinian (counter signed by Hermongenes) explaining that the coming battle was forced upon him against his will and better judgment. Belisarius wrote this letter to Justinian because

Roman military forces were expensive and few in number, and Justinian had always made it clear to expend forces judiciously.

For the battle, Belisarius placed his forces linearly with their back to the river. His plan appeared to be to have the Persians attack, expend their energies on the Roman line, then make a quick transition to the offense with Roman cavalry to finish the Persians.

The battle progressed evenly until Roman allies, the Saracens, ordered to stand fast, disobeyed Belisarius. They sidestepped a Persian cavalry charge and exposed the Roman rear area, causing the Roman defense to crumble. Belisarius, originally fighting on horse, dismounted to prevent panic in the Roman infantry. The Romans, trapped in a collapsing pocket, made their way as best they could across the river to Callinicus. However, the Persians, due to high casualties which were about equal to the Romans,<sup>40</sup> did not pursue and on the next day began the trek back to Persia. For Belisarius this would be the only battle that he would ever lose.

As will be seen, Belisarius' only failing as a military commander surfaces during this battle, that is securing the obedience of his subordinate generals. In the campaigns to come, Belisarius would have to constantly scramble to save the day after his subordinates disobeyed his orders in search of personal glory, greed, or common cowardice.

Although the battle was a tactical defeat, strategically it had no impact. In the following year 532, Justinian and the Persians would sign the Eternal Peace, bringing peace to the

frontier and allowing Justinian to turn his attentions to the West.

Shortly after the battle, Belisarius was honorably recalled to Constantinople by Justinian. The primary reason given for his recall was the bad blood between Belisarius and the Saracen allied commanders after Callinicus. For Justinian, stability and preparedness under a general who could get along with all the allies on the Persian frontier was more important than the prestige of a general. Furthermore, Justinian needed the services of an able commander for future expeditions west.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE VANDAL CAMPAIGN

Justinian possessed imagination. He had formed a high ideal of the might and majesty of the Empire of which he was the master. It humiliated him to contrast its moderate limits with the vast extent of territory over which the word of Constantine had been law. He was dazzled by the idea of restoring the old boundaries of the Roman Empire.<sup>41</sup>

J. B. Bury, History of the Later Roman Empire

This chapter will detail the events that led to the further consolidation of power in Justinian's hands and Belisarius' conquest of North Africa. As will be seen, key to evaluating Belisarius' performance will be the aggressiveness of his cavalry and his ability to influence the flow of events during the campaign.

Before beginning the reconquest of the West, an event would occur in Constantinople that would have a major impact on Justinian's plans for reconquest of the Empire. That event would be known to history as the Nika (Greek for "victory") Revolt.

The Blues and Greens had not taken well to Justinian. The Emperor had been playing each faction against the other, slowly dissipating their power and consolidating that power in the persons of the Emperor and Empress. The populace was also displeased with the crushing tax burden, not to mention cut throat tax collectors needed to support Justinian's vast military

and construction programs. On Sunday, 11 January 532, the Hippodrome's 60,000 spectators revolted, as per the plan of the faction's leaders, and drove the Emperor and Empress from the Hippodrome. Looting and rioting broke out throughout the city, trapping the Emperor and his guard within the walls of the Imperial complex.

As the week progressed, Justinian, with Belisarius at his side, decided that all was lost; he would abdicate and live in exile. A ship was brought up to the Imperial pier and loaded with treasure in preparation for the coming journey. As final plans were being prepared by the Imperial staff with Justinian and Belisarius in private session, the Empress Theodora entered and addressed the Emperor, per Procopius:

My opinion then is that the present time, above all others, is inopportune for flight, even though it bring safety. . . . for one who has been Emperor it is unendurable to be a fugitive. . . . For as for myself, I approve a certain ancient saying that royalty is a good burial shroud.<sup>42</sup>

Upon hearing the Empress' words, Justinian resolved to hold his throne and ordered his two generals at hand, Belisarius and Mundus, to develop a plan to end the rebellion and restore his throne. On Sunday, 18 January, with the Hippodrome packed with rebels and the leadership of the rebellion in the process of electing a new Emperor (they considered the rebellion over and expected Justinian to flee at any moment), Belisarius and Mundus quietly marched the Imperial Guard through the city and blocked the exits of the Hippodrome. Methodically, with the rebels confined in the small controlled space of the Hippodrome and stricken with panic, the Imperial Guard slaughtered between

30,000 and 60,000 rebels.<sup>43</sup> The rebellion was over and the citizens of Constantinople learned that Justinian was not to be trifled with.

As a result, the three pieces of the trinity Justinian needed for extended military operations was in place: the government was united in the hands of the Emperor (key senators and patricians who had sided with the rebellion were either dead or imprisoned); the will of the people was now in the absolute control of Justinian; and the army and its commander, soon to be Belisarius, were now at the hand of Justinian. This, added with the Eternal Peace with the Persians, allowed Justinian to lay his designs on the West into concrete action.

As is often the case, events pointed to where the initial assault in the West should take place. In late 530 A.D., Justinian's boyhood friend Hilderic, loyal supporter of the Eastern Roman Empire, and King of the Vandals, was usurped and imprisoned by his rival Gelimer. Gelimer, as the new King, began a revival of anti-Roman policies, ranging from decreased political support for the Eastern Roman Emperor to attacks on Orthodox Christians within the Kingdom. Upon hearing of Gelimer's seizure of the crown, Justinian sent an emissary to Gelimer demanding either restoration of Hilderic to the throne or, at least, allowing Hilderic to come to Constantinople. If not the peace treaty between the Romans and the Vandals that had been in effect since 476 A.D. would be void. Gelimer scoffed at Justinian's demand.

The Vandals were a Germanic race that originated in the Baltic area and had plundered their way through to the Mediterranean. They had taken up piracy on the Mediterranean for a brief time and in the sixth century were the major sea power of the Mediterranean. They then seized the Roman North African colonies as their kingdom, with Carthage as their capital. The Vandals had ruled this Kingdom for more than 100 years. Yet, they were the minority in their kingdom. The majority of the population in the Vandal Kingdom considered themselves Romans and looked forward to the day of restoration of the Empire. Although the Vandals were generous masters, they were still practitioners of the Aryan Heresy, and not true Christians. Again, politics was subordinate to religion in the thoughts of the populace surrounding the Mediterranean. With the rise of Gelimer, the benevolence of the Vandal master to the Roman citizen decreased.

On paper, Vandal land forces seemed impressive and unconquerable, yet there were major flaws. First, since the end of the fifth century, the only Vandal land combat had been keeping Moorish bandits out of their territory. Although the Vandals could place up to 80,000 men,<sup>44</sup> all cavalry, on the field, few had experience in actual battle. They were poorly trained, equipped with inferior armor, and armed with only lance and sword, no javelin or archery. Secondly, their leadership and organizational structure were ineffective, with the lowest level of officer being a "Chiliarch"<sup>45</sup> or leader of 1,000, which was the smallest unit within the Vandal force. As will be seen, this large organization for combat, with an extreme leader to led

ratio, was cumbersome and vulnerable. Unlike the Roman system where promotion and appointment were based primarily on skill and achievement, a Vandal chiliarch tended to be appointed on blood relationship to the crown. Finally, most historians agree that the Vandals had grown soft while living in the warm Mediterranean climate, off the labors of their Roman subjects, and without a threat of an invasion from other kingdoms and empires. However, the Vandals did keep their naval forces the strongest in the Mediterranean.

As the dust settled on the Nika Revolt, Justinian had ordered planning for the reconquest of the Vandal Kingdom. As commander for this operation he chose his former General of the East who had stood with him during the Nika revolt, Belisarius.

The Emperor's advisors were aghast at the possibility of an expedition against the Vandals. In a previous expedition during 467 A.D. the Eastern Roman Emperor Leo had launched more than 100,000 troops in 1,100 ships from Constantinople to North Africa with the mission of reconquering the Vandal Kingdom. This force was annihilated in North Africa. The Emperor's advisors knew that to assemble even one fifth of that force was probably beyond the capability of the Empire. The cost of rebuilding Constantinople after the riots, and Justinian's ambitious building program (which would shortly yield one of the most magnificent structures in history, Saint Sofia's), coupled with political, social, and military pressures from nearly every direction on the Empire's frontiers, made the cost of an expedition seem prohibitive. Since Justinian could only assemble

a minor force compared to Leos' expedition, and the Vandals had not apparently grown any weaker, what chance would a Roman expedition have?

After constant pleading by his staff to forget about the expedition, Justinian began to have second thoughts about the invasion and, according to Procopius:

checked his eager desire for the war. But one of the priests they call Bishops, who had come from the East, said that he wished to have a word with the Emperor. And when he met Justinian, he said that God had visited him in a dream, and bidden him go to the Emperor and rebuke him, because, after undertaking the task of protecting the Christians in Libya from tyrants, he had for no good reason become afraid. "And yet," He had said, "I will Myself join with him in waging war and make him lord of Libya. "When the Emperor heard this, he was no longer able to restrain his purpose, and he began to collect the Army and the ships, and to make ready supplies of weapons and food, and he announced to Belisarius that he should be in readiness, because he was very soon to act as general in Libya.<sup>46</sup>

Of course, neither the Emperor nor Procopius considered that the Bishop's motive might have been to increase his own power and influence in North Africa if Justinian was successful. Be that as it may, the invasion of the Vandal Kingdom was on.

As Belisarius prepared his forces for the expedition, Justinian prepared the theater of war. First, Justinian's agents fermented a revolt among the populace in Tripoli, with new leadership there seizing the city and declaring their allegiance to Justinian. In what we would now term a special operation, Justinian sent a small number of Roman soldiers in disguise to Tripoli to support, arm, and train the rebels. Simultaneously, Justinian's agents influenced the population of Sardinia, a Vandal holding, into revolt and succession.

Gelimer responded to events in precisely the wrong manner. He ignored the revolt in Tripoli. Unless crushed, this revolt could allow a Roman expeditionary force an open and safe port of debarkation in the Vandal Kingdom. As for the revolt in Sardinia, he sent his brother Tzazo, the ablest Vandal commander, along with 5,000 men and 120 ships, to return the island to Vandal control. With an invasion imminent, Gelimer had sent his best commander and a large part of his fleet, the Vandal's strongest asset, outside the immediately threatened area of operation to conquer an island that had no bearing on the outcome of a possible Roman invasion.

In June 533 A.D., Belisarius set sail from Constantinople with 10,000 infantry, 3,000 federate and regular cavalry, 2,000 Household Cavalry, 600 Huns, and 400 Heruls in 500 transport ships and 92 regular ships of war for protection.<sup>47</sup> The citizens of Constantinople must have been shocked watching this armada as it passed through the Bosphorus, remembering the failure of the much larger force of Emperor Leo. Yet there was nothing that they could do.

During the journey, which would include many stops, two events are of interest concerning Belisarius leadership style and the problems he faced. At one stop, several Huns became intoxicated, in violation of Belisarius' edict forbidding alcohol during the campaign, and killed a comrade during a drunken brawl. As punishment for the offenders, Belisarius used the worst penalty imaginable to a Hun: impalement. With impalement occurring on a hill in full view of the rest of the army,

Belisarius' soldiers nearly revolted at what they considered an overly harsh sentence for drunken horseplay. Belisarius, as testament to his charisma and rhetorical skills, addressed his troops and any thought of mutiny was soon dissipated. With this as an example of his leadership style, we can see Belisarius as a man of extremes. For the wounded soldiers at Daras, Belisarius would pay out of his personal wealth for their care and pension.<sup>48</sup> He could quell any thoughts of mutiny through speech and sincerity. Yet, for infractions which could jeopardize his tactical plans, he would mete out the worst type of punishment imaginable.

Another event of interest is that of the Empire's contractors who were paid to provide bread for the expedition. Their contract was for twice baked bread, which would not spoil during the voyage. To increase their profit, the contractors provided only partially baked bread, which was not discovered until the voyage was well under way. It caused severe sickness among the troops on the transports. The expedition nearly ended before it began. Belisarius was faced with a major logistics problem which he solved by making several unplanned stops along the way. Rather than arriving with a depleted force, Belisarius chose to arrive with a combat ready force, in good spirits. He risked losing time and surprise for the welfare of his soldiers. Thus, the problems of a "lowest bidder" contractor appear ageless.

The final stop prior to landing in the Vandal Kingdom was at Sicily, where Belisarius reprovisioned his force and attempted

to gather intelligence on Vandal dispositions. In a rare case of chronicler becoming participant, Procopius unexpectedly ran into a boyhood acquaintance, who as a sailor, had just landed in Sicily from the Vandal Kingdom. From this friend, Procopius learned two vital pieces of intelligence: (1) the Vandals had no idea of the coming Roman invasion and had taken no defensive precautions, and (2) the Vandal fleet was currently committed to supporting operations on Sardinia, away from Belisarius' lines of operation. When Belisarius learned of this intelligence, he ordered his forces to set sail immediately for the African coast.

Enroute, Belisarius held a council of war for the coming expedition. The joint council, both generals and admirals, unanimously recommended landing directly at Carthage and surprising the Vandals.<sup>49</sup> Belisarius overruled his council and ordered a landing at a point distant from Carthage on the African coast. It can be inferred that sailing into Carthage would move the Roman fleet into the Vandal navy's lines of operation to Sardinia. Belisarius' forces' greatest weakness was a fight on sea. Nearly all were seasick, and Belisarius' greatest asset, his cavalry, was worthless on a ship. The Vandals strongest suit was their naval forces, so Belisarius would forsake surprise to cut down his exposure time to the Vandal fleet. The second reason, and this must be inferred from his modus operandi, is that Belisarius did not want to attack without excellent intelligence preparation of the battlefield in order to conduct tactical operations on his own terms. Also, as can be seen more clearly in his second campaign in Italy, Belisarius had a near

phobia about landing troops on shore. He considered the period of transition from sea to land as a most vulnerable time for his forces. He would always land at a point that was away from enemy forces, both ground and naval, and at a place that could be quickly, if not already, fortified. Landing at Carthage would be a gamble that he could not justify.

Belisarius landed in North Africa in late August at Caputvada, 162 miles from Carthage. Although Belisarius would march toward Carthage, the Vandal capital and power base, he knew that the Vandal army was the center of gravity of the Vandal Kingdom. Belisarius also knew that the Vandals would take the field before he reached Carthage. He could only hope that he could shape events to his own advantage.

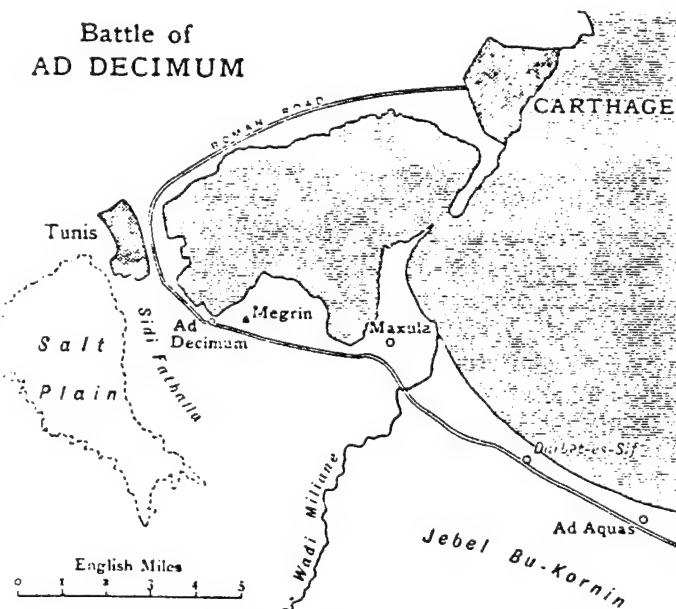


Fig. 7. Reprinted from: J. B. Bury, The History of the Later Roman Empire, (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), 133.

Belisarius began his march along the coast road (shown in figure 7) toward Carthage at a rate of eleven miles a day (the rate of march was determined by the army's need each day to build a fortified camp). The Roman fleet remained nearby offshore, providing logistics and evacuation if needed.

Screening his inland flank at a distance of about six miles, was the 600 strong Hun squadron. Belisarius received logistical support from the local populace, who were ecstatic with the return of the Romans. To enhance this popular support, Belisarius took strict measures with his army to ensure relations remained so, including severe punishments for soldiers actions which were usually considered trivial.<sup>50</sup>

Gelimer, initially caught off guard by the invasion (and upon hearing of it immediately had Hilderic executed), recovered quickly. Gelimer devised a plan where he would trap Belisarius along the coast road where the geography narrowed at Ad Decimum. He would block the front of Belisarius' column and simultaneously attack into the flank and rear of the Romans. At first glance, this plan appears to be sound; however, it required complex synchronization to work. Due to the lack of command and control capabilities, synchronization of forces over vast distances (dozens of miles) in the sixth century was next to impossible.

Two days into the march, Belisarius' scouts discovered a large formation of Vandals following the Roman column, less than a day's march away. This was the Vandal main force under the personal command of Gelimer, preparing to smash into the rear of the Romans when they were blocked at Ad Decimum. As Belisarius

made the approach to Ad Decimum, he decided to encamp his infantry in a fortified camp off the road and continue the march to Carthage with his cavalry forces only. This added flexibility and security to Belisarius' operation. The slower moving infantry force was safe behind their fortification from the Vandal cavalry. If the Vandals attacked the infantry, Belisarius could swing around and attack the Vandal rear. As Procopius explains:

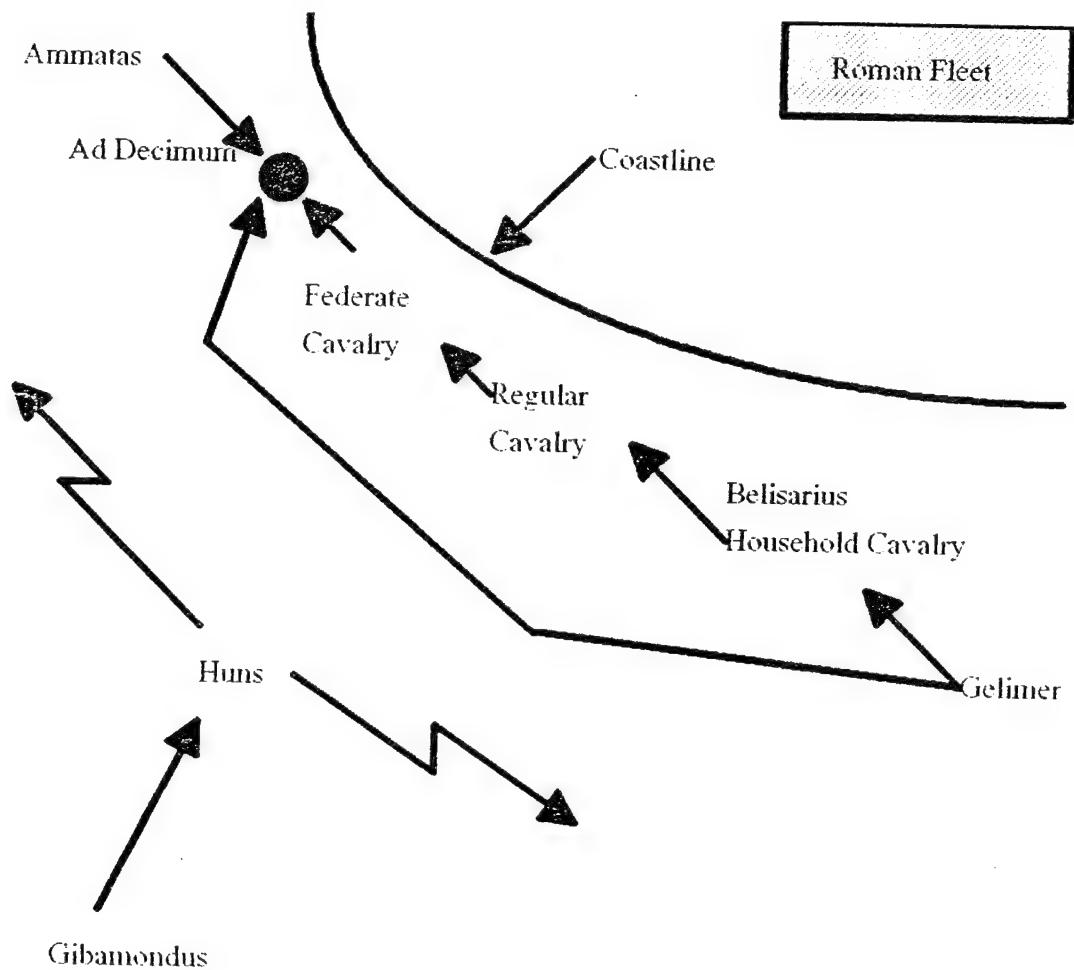


Fig. 8. The Battle of Ad Decimum

For it did not seem to him advantageous for the present to risk an engagement with the whole army, but it seemed wise to skirmish first with the horsemen and make trial of the enemy's strength, and finally to fight a decisive battle with the whole army.<sup>51</sup>

As shown in figure 8, Belisarius proceeded towards Ad Decimum with about two-to-three miles between formations, with himself and his Household Cavalry in the rear where the Vandal attack was expected. Ammatas, brother of Gelimer, left Carthage earlier than the appointed time with his forces, moving out slowly and sloppily, in bands of twenty or thirty<sup>52</sup> from the city. Either bored or anxious to conduct a reconnaissance of the site, Ammatas and a small bodyguard arrived early (approximately at noon) at Ad Decimum and unexpectedly ran into the first formation of Roman cavalry. The Romans immediately charged. Ammatas killed twelve Roman cavalrymen before he himself was killed. With the death of Ammatas, the remaining Vandals fled back to Carthage. The Roman cavalry followed, destroying the small, unorganized bands of Vandals in detail. By nightfall, this formation was at the gates of Carthage. On the salt plain about six miles away, the Huns met up with the Vandal commander, Gelimer's nephew, Gibamundus and his 2,000 Vandals.<sup>53</sup> The Vandals, seeing fierce Huns for the first time and knowing their audacious reputation for battle, froze. The chief of the Huns addressed his squadron "God has sent [us] these strangers as a feast."<sup>54</sup> The Huns charged and made short work of the Vandals.

Both Belisarius and Gelimer were unaware of these events. Gelimer, for reasons that are somewhat unclear, he may have

concluded that the Roman rear guard was too strong, left the coast road and took a shorter, inland road to Ad Decimum. The vanguard of this force ran into the vanguard of the next Roman formation. The Romans fled and panic spread to the Roman cavalry who fled back to Belisarius, who rallied his cavalrymen and ordered a charge back to Ad Decimum. Gelimer, coming upon the body of Ammatas, fell apart emotionally at the sight of his dead brother, while his Vandal force milled around and became disorganized. According to Procopius:

When he [Gelimer] . . . . saw the corpse of his brother, he turned to lamentations, and, in caring for his burial, he blunted the edge of his opportunity--an opportunity which he was not able to grasp again.<sup>55</sup>

When Belisarius and his forces arrived at Ad Decimum, their immediate charge at the numerically superior Vandals caused the Vandals to flee. Gelimer, knowing a Roman force was approaching the gates of Carthage, headed his force inland, away from his capital.

Although much of Belisarius' success is due in part to the ineptness and emotional instability of Gelimer, much can be said of Belisarius' strategy along with his cavalry's training and aggressiveness. Without the determination and skill of the Roman and Hun cavalry, Ad Decimum would have surely been a Roman loss. Belisarius' strategy of increasing his mobility by safely encamping the infantry, and moving along the coast in loose detachments which could engage and disengage the Vandals at will, set the stage for development of the situation. If the Vandals had fought well at Ad Decimum and had provided no opening,

Belisarius could have disengaged and tried again later to capitalize on a Vandal mistake.

Belisarius and his forces entered Carthage on September 15th to a warm reception by its Roman inhabitants. Belisarius, aware that Gelimer still had a sizable force and was intent on destroying him, began increasing the defenses of Carthage against siege.

Gelimer, reforming his forces inland, recalled his brother Tzazo from Sardinia. Tzazo had quashed the rebellion and regained Vandal control of the island. Gelimer marched to Tricamaron, about 20 miles from Carthage. Rather than lay siege to his own capital, Gelimer attempted to subvert Belisarius' command by slipping agents into the city to bribe Roman soldiers, allies, and key administrators. Belisarius quickly discovered these activities and diplomatically countered them. For instance, the Huns were quite enticed by Gelimer's promises. However, Belisarius countered these promises with pledges that were more in line with Hun desires. In the case of the Huns, Belisarius promised them an early return to their homeland as soon as the campaign was over.<sup>56</sup> Thus, the Huns were with the Romans on the field of the next battle. In the end, Gelimer's efforts for a subversive victory were of no avail.

Belisarius who, as already seen, abhorred sieges, went on the offensive in December 533. Apparently he felt that the inactivity on the part of the Vandals camping at Tricameron had sapped their strength. He also desired to end the campaign before fortune turned against him. If he failed in battle, he

could return his beaten force to the safety of Carthage and attempt battle another day. He assembled his army for the march and addressed them, as always, before battle. He pointed out (Procopius):

Now as for the host of the Vandals, let no one of you consider them. For not by numbers of men nor by measure of body, but by valor of soul is war decided. And let the strongest motive which actuates men come to your minds, namely, pride in past achievement. . . . Thus having the end of the war ready at hand, do not by reason of any negligence put it off to another time, lest you be compelled to seek for the opportune moment after it has run past us. For when the fortune of war is postponed, its nature is not to proceed in the same manner as before, especially if the war be prolonged by the will of those who are carrying it on.<sup>57</sup>

Belisarius and the cavalry proceeded to Tricameron. The infantry followed, at a much slower pace, far behind. Gelimer, with his brother Tzazo, had the Vandal army arranged in a single block formation to meet the Romans. For some inexplicable reason, the Vandals had armed themselves only with sword, discarding all other weapons.<sup>58</sup> Their plan for the Romans was simple; let the outnumbered Romans attack and then swallow them in the Vandal host. Gelimer probably knew Belisarius' victory over the Persians and he certainly knew the maneuvering of Belisarius within his own Kingdom; he and his army would force Belisarius on the offensive for this battle. Gelimer expected Belisarius to attempt a maneuver to draw him in, but the Vandals would stand fast.

Belisarius and his cavalry arrived (the infantry was still marching far behind) and faced off squarely against the Vandals. Belisarius ordered small detachments to charge and antagonize the Vandals into attacking, all to no avail. Next,

the Romans launched a major sortie across the field, targeting Tzazo and the Vandal leadership that were surrounding him. Tzazo's location was easily identifiable by the elegant armor and standards around him. With this attack as narrated by Procopius:

the battle became fierce, and many of the noblest of the Vandals fell, and among them Tzazo. . . . Then at last the Roman army was set in motion. . . . and the rout, beginning at the center, became complete; for each of the Roman divisions turned to flight those before them with no trouble.<sup>59</sup>

Gelimer, in shock again, fled the battlefield. "And there perished in this battle, of Romans less than fifty, but of Vandals, about eight hundred."<sup>60</sup> The Roman infantry arrived just in time to assist in the plundering of the Vandal camp. Belisarius lost control of his army that night as they pillaged the riches in the Vandal camp. He feared that if the Vandals grouped and returned, all would be lost. But the Vandals were broken, and Justinian had achieved the first step in the conquest of the West.

Belisarius completed mopping up operations, including the capture of Gelimer himself who was well treated. Part of Belisarius' success in subduing the Vandals after Tricameron was the generous terms of amnesty offered the Vandals. The best Vandal warriors entered the Household Cavalry. Additionally five Vandal regiments were raised to serve Justinian on the Persian frontier. Belisarius sent detachments to seize Vandal holdings outside of North Africa, e.g., Sardinia, Corsica, etc., before the Visigoths or Ostrogoths could claim them.

As events settled down, jealous officers within Belisarius' command began sending private messages to Justinian claiming that Belisarius would claim himself the new King of the Vandals, and declare independence from Constantinople. As would always haunt him, his subordinate generals gave Belisarius more trouble than any enemy. Justinian probably did not believe these self-serving messages, but sent word to Belisarius that he could either remain governor of North Africa or return to Constantinople. Knowing about the slanderous correspondence to his Emperor, Belisarius decided to return to Constantinople. In 534 A.D., Belisarius, with Gelimer, Vandal slaves and treasure in tow, received one of the last Roman triumphs in history through the streets of Constantinople. As told by Procopius:

And when Gelimer reached the Hippodrome and saw the Emperor sitting upon a lofty seat and the people standing on either side and realized as he looked about in what an evil plight he was, he neither wept nor cried out, but ceased not saying over in the words of Hebrew scripture' Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.'<sup>61</sup>

Although good fortune and poor Vandal leadership played a role in this conquest, one could easily overlook the accomplishments of superior training, aggressiveness, planning, and leadership of Belisarius. Especially the aggressiveness and the skills of the Roman cavalry were key to Belisarius' victory. At the battle of Tricameron, he knew the Vandal center of gravity was their leadership and he attacked that center directly. The Vandal campaign also shows another example of Belisarius' strategic offensive, tactical defensive, then tactical offensive modus operandi. By landing in Africa, he assumed the strategic

offensive. Cautiously maneuvering his forces, he passed the initiative to the Vandals as he assumed the tactical defensive. When the Vandals offered their weaknesses, he assumed the tactical offensive. Key to this achievement was the use of smaller, highly mobile, effectively trained and armed troops who were led by a commander who could act and respond faster than his enemies.

Two other factors were key to Belisarius' success. First was flexibility and not casting the fate of the campaign on a single battle of annihilation. As Belisarius moved down the coast in loose formation, with the Roman fleet offshore, he had a range of options (retreat, evacuate, attack, etc.) open to him when faced with the Vandal force. If he lost at Tricameron, he could go back to Carthage and hold and await reinforcements from Justinian. He never put his back against the wall and risked the entire expedition on a single battle. The second factor was the grooming of popular support on foreign soil. Doing so eliminated the need to provide troops for rear security, along with improving his intelligence and logistics networks.

These competencies will be seen to a greater extent in Belisarius' next and greatest campaign, the Gothic campaign.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE GOTHIC CAMPAIGN

The principal qualifications for a general should be evident from those we have just set down for all officials. In addition, the general should be manly in his attitudes, naturally suited for command, profound in his thinking, sound in his judgment, in good physical condition, hardworking, emotionally stable. He should instill fear in the disobedient, while he should be gracious and kind to the others. His concern for the common good should be such that he will neglect nothing at all that may be to its advantage. The general must be judged by his actions, and it is preferable that he be chosen for command by his record.<sup>62</sup>

Anonymous Sixth Century Byzantine Text, Three Byzantine Military Treatises

This chapter will review and analyze the greatest of Belisarius' campaigns, the campaign against the Ostrogoths and conquest of the Italian peninsula.

"A Roman Empire that did not include Rome was an obvious absurdity; an Ostrogoth Kingdom. . . . could never be anything but an abomination in his [Justinian] sight."<sup>63</sup> With this point of view, Justinian laid his designs on the conquest of the Gothic Kingdom. Planning for the reconquest of the Italian peninsula apparently began as soon as North Africa was secure. Again, Belisarius would play the key role in operations against the Goths with success or failure resting in large part on his generalship.

The Goths had originally migrated from the Black Sea area, forcibly pushed back into the old Roman Empire by the Huns. In 488 A.D., the Goths took control of Italy (figure 9 includes a map of Italy) and had been amicable masters of the Italians. Italians served as administrators and laborers on the peninsula, along with still holding all the old ceremonial Roman posts (e.g., senators), while the Goths were the landowners and warrior class of Italy. According to Norwich:

The situation in Italy was altogether different from that which had prevailed in Vandal North Africa . . . .the Ostrogoth King ruled--theoretically at any rate--in the Emperor's name as his Viceroy . . . .took immense pains to cultivate the friendship of the Pope and leading Romans. In consequence he enjoyed great popularity among the citizens of the Empire whom he governed; and Justinian was well aware that those citizens, satisfied as they were with the status quo, might well resent the increased regimentation--to say nothing of the heavier taxation--that would be sure to follow Italy's reintegration into the Empire.<sup>64</sup>

The Goths were singularly fierce warriors, who chastised any of their comrades who learned to read or showed an interest in more sophisticated pursuits. The Gothic cavalryman wore a helmet, a mail or scale corselet, carried a wooden shield, and was armed with spears and a long sword. Gothic cavalrymen did not usually cover their horses with armor nor did the rider use a bow. Foot archers, were, however part of Goth battle formations.<sup>65</sup> The Goths could field, as will be seen, up to 150,000 men for a single battle. A reproduction of a Goth warrior is shown at figure 10.

The king of the Goths at this time was Theodad, with his throne at the Goth capital of Ravenna. Theodad's character and disposition were antithetical to that of the Goth warrior: he

reveled in philosophy and other non-militaristic pursuits. To quote Bury, he: "was devoid of military spirit and capacity."<sup>66</sup> Although the circumstance is far too complex to relate in this paper, Theodad had, in the eyes of Justinian, usurped the throne



Fig. 9. Map of Italy. Reprinted from: John Norwich. Byzantium, The Early Centuries, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), maps.

of the Goths. This view provided Justinian with the *casus belli* he needed to initiate actions against Theodad to recover the Gothic Kingdom.

Unlike the conquest of the Vandals, Justinian's plan for extending the Roman Empire back to Italy would be a secretive, phased operation that would initially attempt to achieve its

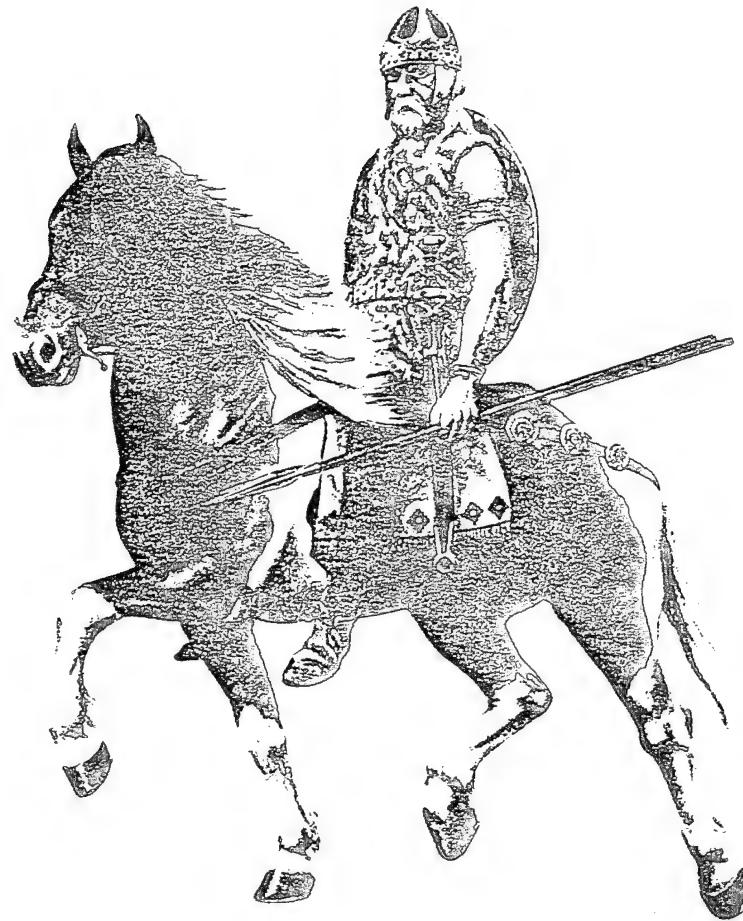


Fig. 10. The Goth Warrior. Reprinted from: V. Vuksic and Z. Grabsic, Cavalry. The History of a Fighting Elite, (London: Cassell Publishing, 1993), 55.

objective through use of diplomatic pressure and threat of military force alone. Justinian believed Theodad's weak character coupled with the Roman's recent successes under Belisarius could, if the proper pressure was applied, lead to Justinian's political objective of the Italian crown without the cost of a major military expedition. If this initial attempt failed, Justinian would begin limited military operations in Sicily and Dalmatia to turn the screw tighter on Theodad. In conjunction with these limited operations, Justinian had enticed with gold<sup>67</sup> the Franks in the north to apply pressure and threaten an invasion of northern Italy. If Theodad, facing military operations on three separate lines,<sup>68</sup> still did not yield, Justinian could proceed with full military operations to achieve his objective.

In 535, Belisarius, only months after his triumph from North Africa, sailed to Sicily under the guise of stopping at this Ostrogoth held island as a way point enroute to North Africa. Belisarius' orders from Justinian were to reconnoiter the island, determine the Goth strength, and seize the island if certain of victory. If Goth strength was determined to be too strong, Belisarius was to continue on to Carthage.

Accompanying Belisarius to Sicily were about 8000 troops, including several hundred of his Household Cavalry and a few hundred Huns.<sup>69</sup> To quote Bury: "He [Belisarius] was to run no risks with his small Army. This cautious plan of action shows that the Emperor was not yet prepared to commit himself to an Italian campaign."<sup>70</sup> "Justinian still considered that diplomacy,

or diplomacy in conjunction with a military demonstration would achieve his objective. One reason for Justinian's wishful thinking was the vast sums of money needed to conduct extensive military operations on the Italian peninsula. Justinian's massive building program throughout Constantinople and the Empire was expensive and nearly as important to ensure the Emperor's greatness through eternity. Justinian desired to spend additional moneys on his building program rather than a needless military operation.

Upon landing in Sicily, Belisarius found that not only could the island be easily taken, but that the Sicilians themselves were eager to support his expedition to retake the island for Justinian. Only at modern day Palermo did Belisarius have to undertake serious operations. The Goth garrison, feeling secure behind their strong fortifications, refused to surrender. Belisarius, in an example of his creativity, had boats placed on the top of the masts of his ships,<sup>71</sup> with archers placed in the boats. As the ships entered the port of Palermo, Belisarius' archers were above the walls of the city and rained arrows down upon the Goth defenders, who quickly surrendered. On December 31st, 535,<sup>72</sup> Palermo, along with all of Sicily, to include the full support of the Sicilians, were under Belisarius' command.

Previously, in September of 535, the Roman general Mundus, who had assisted Belisarius during the Nika revolt, had moved into Dalmatia and had taken his objective, the city of Salona. With the dual losses of Sicily and Dalmatia, Theodad was about to concede into all of Justinian's demands. However, as

negotiations were going on between Ravenna and Constantinople, the Goths were able to win back Dalmatia. Tactically the Romans won the fight, but Mundus died in the process, and the leaderless Romans withdrew in March, 536.<sup>73</sup> When Theodad was informed about the Goth victory in Dalmatia, he cut off negotiations with Justinian. Justinian's hopes for a diplomatic solution after a limited military operation to conquer Italy were dashed.

Justinian, after reviewing the situation in Italy, ordered "Belisarius to enter Italy at all speed and to treat the Goths as enemies."<sup>74</sup> Additionally, Justinian assigned a new commander, Constantian, to the Roman forces in Illyria and ordered him to retake Salona. Upon receiving his new orders for full military operations, Belisarius garrisoned Syracuse and Palermo, and crossed with his small army from Messina to Rhegium, with Naples being his first objective. As Lawrence Fauber points out; "the conquest of the Italian mainland bears a historical similarity to the campaign of the Allies against the Axis . . . . [the] 'soft underbelly' strategical approach using Sicily as a springboard."<sup>75</sup>

Belisarius arrived at Naples in October 536 to find a well-fortified city that refused to surrender. The Neapolitans, with a Goth garrison within their walls and a Goth relief force expected to lift any siege Belisarius might lay, suggested that Belisarius bypass Naples. To paraphrase Robert Graves,<sup>76</sup> when faced with a siege operation, the attacker has six options: bypass, use starvation, assault, negotiate, bribe, or use some form of trickery. Belisarius could not bypass Naples,

as Rome was his next objective and Naples was too large a city and too threatening to his logistical lines to leave in his rear. For Belisarius to try starvation would take too long and would allow the Goths in Italy the opportunity to concentrate against him. The fortifications of Naples were too strong for direct assault, and an engineering approach for an assault would again take too long. Belisarius tried both negotiations and bribes to get the Neapolitans to open the gates of the city; however, both were to no avail.

Left with only trickery, Belisarius ordered his officers to search for a "backdoor" into Naples. To quote Bury: "the luck which had signally favored him hitherto was again with him."<sup>77</sup> One of Belisarius' soldiers found an old, small aqueduct that led under the walls into the city. Belisarius slipped six hundred men into the city to clear the walls for Belisarius' troops waiting outside, who scaled the cleared wall and took the city in early November 536.<sup>78</sup> As an interesting note, Belisarius began his psychological preparation of the battlefield when the city fell. His goal was to start to break the Goth's will to fight by setting an example of leniency, to quote Procopius:

As for the Goths who were captured in the city, not less than eight hundred in number, Belisarius put them under guard and kept them from all harm, holding them in no less honor than his own soldiers.<sup>79</sup>

Belisarius was establishing the pattern he would follow of making surrender a palatable proposition to the Goths.

Theodad, who had been paralyzed by fear into inaction, was replaced by the Goth nobles in November 536. The new King of

the Goths was Witigis, a noble who had some previous minor military victories under his belt. Immediately facing Witigis were three military threats: the Franks massing on the northwestern frontier; the Romans, under Constantian, who had captured Dalmatia and Salona again; and finally Belisarius. Witigis decided that the Franks, with their greater numbers, were the primary threat to the Kingdom. The Romans in Dalmatia were too few in number to conduct offensive operations. As for Belisarius, he may be marching on Rome, but he only had about 5000 troops. Witigis' strategy was then to mass and turn on the Franks, settle with them, and then turn on Belisarius. In retrospect, Witigis should have dealt with the mobile army, under the command of the renowned Belisarius, the immediate threat marching toward Rome, rather than dealing with the Franks, who had not yet invaded and had no intention to.

Although Witigis was turning his forces against the Franks, he decided to leave a detachment of 4,000 men in Rome to hold the city and prevent its capture by Belisarius. The Goths failed to realize, however, that the population of Rome would be enthusiastically supportive of the approaching Belisarius because he and his soldiers were fellow "true" Christians. When the Goths discovered that they had both an unfriendly population on their hands and Belisarius marching against them, they decided to evacuate the city. Only the Goth commander, Leuderis, remained from the garrison to surrender himself to Belisarius when the latter entered Rome on December Ninth, 536.<sup>80</sup> Belisarius sent the keys of the city and Leuderis back to Justinian as a prize.

Immediately, Belisarius began to fortify the city and restock supplies. The walls of Rome had fallen into major disrepair, and Belisarius planned to withstand a long siege by the Goths. Belisarius' plan was again the strategic offensive, tactical defensive, then tactical offensive. Belisarius had entered Italy on the strategic offensive. Now he was going on the tactical defensive by staying within the walls of Rome, planning to have the Goths dash their strength against those walls. When they were weakened enough he would switch back to the tactical offensive as the tide turned back to his advantage.

Additionally, Belisarius sent detachments out to seize the cities of Perugia, Spoleto, and Narni. With these fortified cities taken, Belisarius forced the Goths, as they marched from the north to Rome, to fight their way though to the gates of Rome, thus buying additional time for preparing the defense of Rome. Witigis would also need to clear these garrisons to ensure his logistical lines stayed open with Ravenna.

Witigis, in the meantime, had made peace with the Franks by exchanging gold and territory for a guarantee of peace. Marching his army south, Witigis attempted to retake Salona. Facing a long siege in Salona, he decided to continue on to Rome, which he considered an easy victory. This belief was due to the poor condition of Rome's circuit wall, its great length, and the small number of defenders. While marching to Rome, Witigis was forced to clear out the Roman garrisons along the way to Rome, buying more time for Belisarius to prepare Rome for siege.

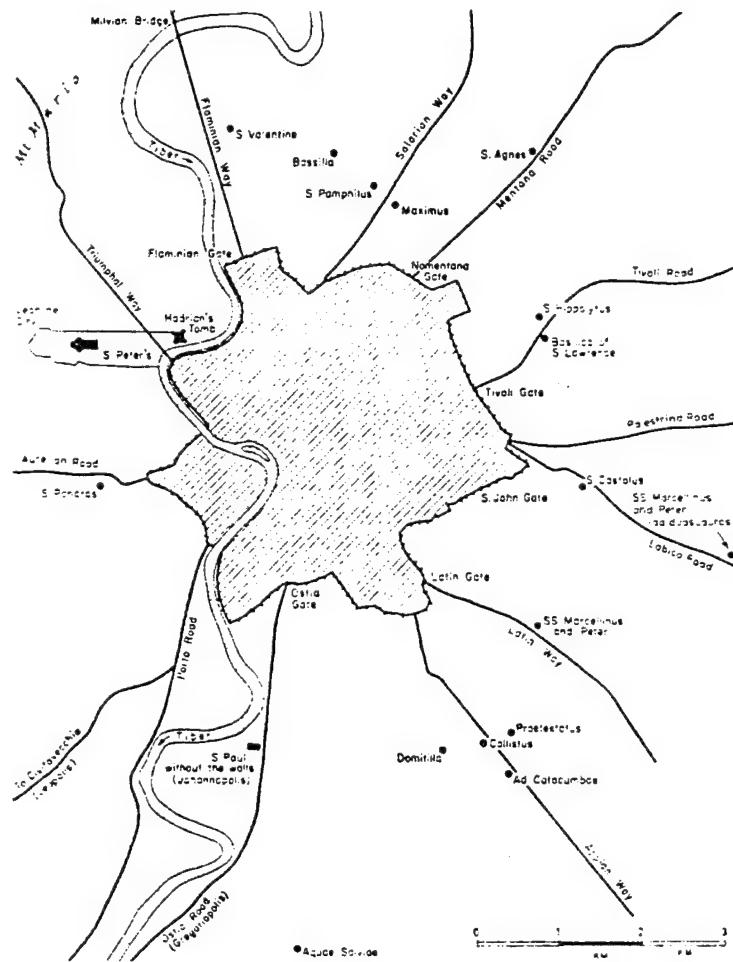


Fig. 11. Map of Rome. Reprinted from Peter Llewellyn, Rome in the Dark Ages, (New York: Dorset Press, 1993), maps.

Witigis, with an army of 150,000 Goths, descended upon Rome in March, 537 to begin a siege that would last a year and nine days.<sup>81</sup> A minority of historians considers this number from Procopius somewhat exaggerated; however Gibbons and Hart, among others believe the number is 150,000). As the Goths approached

Rome, Belisarius garrisoned a small force at the Milvian Bridge in order to hold this approach which is a short distance from the walls of Rome. Unbeknownst to Belisarius, as the Goth host approached the bridge, this small garrison of Romans deserted to the Goths. While Belisarius' cavalry was skirmishing with the advance guard of the Goths who had crossed the bridge, according to Procopius, Belisarius, fearing for his troops that he had left on the other side of the bridge displayed great personal courage:

Then Belisarius, though he was safe before, would no longer keep his general's post, but began to fight in the front ranks like a soldier; and consequently the cause of Romans was thrown into great danger, for the whole decision of the war rested with him . . . . But Belisarius himself, turning from side to side, kept killing as they came those that encountered him, and he also profited very greatly by the loyalty of his own spearmen and guards in this moment of danger. For they all surrounded him and made a display of valour such, I imagine as has never been shewn any man in the world to this day. . . .<sup>82</sup>

Belisarius fought his way through the Goths to find his men gone from their small garrison. Belisarius had to fight his way back to Rome and arrived at nightfall unharmed. This is just one example of many that illustrates Belisarius' personal courage, martial skill, and concern for the soldiers under his command. Also, his personal bravery and tenacity, at the beginning of a long siege, set the standard for his soldiers.

When Belisarius returned to Rome that night he ensured an officer and a detachment guarded each of Rome's fourteen gates. During the night, a messenger arrived that the Goths had entered one of the back gates and were taking the city. According to Procopius:

And all those who were in the company of Belisarius, upon hearing this, urged him to save himself as quickly as possible through some other gate. He, however neither became panic-stricken, nor did he hesitate to declare the report false. And he sent some of his horsemen with all speed, and they, after looking over the ground there, brought back word that no hostile attack had been made on the city in that quarter. He therefore sent immediately to each gate and instructed the commanders everywhere that, whenever they heard that the enemy had broken in at any other part of the fortifications, they should not try to assist in defense nor abandon their post, but should remain quiet; for he himself would take care of such matters.<sup>83</sup>

Witigis established seven camps around Rome for his army of 150,000 men. Witigis' first step was to cut the aqueducts into Rome, which were not needed so much for the city's drinking supply, but to run the grain mills for making bread. But, as an example of Belisarius' engineering skills, he personally designed a system of water wheels placed on boats. These boats were then placed in the Tiber River and the water wheel's drive was connected to the milling machines to provide flour. The Goths would try numerous other measures, but Belisarius would always find a countermeasure.

Eighteen days into the siege, the Goths attempted a full scale assault on the city, as Procopius relates:

and all the Romans were struck with consternation at the sight of the advancing towers and rams. . . . But Belisarius, seeing the ranks of the enemy as they advanced with the engines, began to laugh, and commanded the soldiers to remain quiet and under no circumstances to begin fighting until he himself should give the signal. Now the reason why he laughed he did not reveal at the moment, but later it became known. The Romans, however, supposing him to be hiding his real feelings by a jest, abused him and called him shameless, and were indignant that he did not try to check the enemy as they came forward. But when the Goths came near the moat, the general first of all stretched his bow and with a lucky aim hit in the neck one of the men in armor who were leading the army on. And he fell on his back mortally wounded, while the whole Roman army raised an extraordinary shout, thinking

that they had received an excellent omen. And twice did Belisarius send forth his bolt, and the very same thing happened a second time. . . . those near himself [Belisarius] he commanded to shoot only at the oxen. And the oxen fell immediately, so that the enemy could neither move the towers further nor in their perplexity do anything to meet the emergency while the fighting was in progress. In this way the forethought of Belisarius in not trying to check the enemy while still at a great distance came to be understood, as well as the reason why he had laughed at the simplicity of the barbarians, who had been so thoughtless as to hope to bring oxen up to the enemy's wall.<sup>84</sup>

After the battle and when the Goths had retreated, the Romans went out and burned the abandoned towers.

The above provides two excellent examples of Belisarius' personal leadership qualities. First was his technical competence in martial skills with the bow, displayed in front of his entire army and the enemy. Qualification for promotion under Belisarius included surpassing one's peers in all martial craft,<sup>85</sup> e.g., horsemanship, archery, swordsmanship, etc. Belisarius, as general of the army, through personal example ensured his martial abilities on the field of battle were not exceeded by any of his soldiers or officers. This observation is consistent with a previous example of Belisarius fighting through the Goth host. Second, as seen previously, Belisarius the commander had Coup d'oeil. Clausewitz defines Coup d'oeil as "the quick recognition of a truth that the mind would ordinarily miss or would perceive only after long study or reflection."<sup>86</sup> Belisarius instantly saw the folly of the Goth's unprotected oxen and the means to exploit that folly when those around him failed to understand the Goth's mistake.

The battle that day raged until nightfall. The Goths made assaults on all the gates of Rome. Belisarius moved from gate to gate to personally control the battle for that part of the circuit wall. When the Romans had beaten the Goths back at a particular point and the Goths had begun their retreat, Belisarius would launch cavalry detachments into the retreating Goth's rear, causing additional causalities and demoralizing the Goth warriors. By the end of the day, Procopius writes that 30,000 Goths were killed and a much larger number wounded, while "the Romans singing the song of victory on the fortifications and lauding Belisarius to the skies."<sup>87</sup> Gibbon writes that: "This perilous day was the most glorious in the life of Belisarius."<sup>88</sup>

In the coming days, Belisarius would switch to a more active defense, capitalizing on his cavalry's superior technology. As stated before, the Goth cavalry did not use the bow. Belisarius sent his Household Cavalry and the Huns out to challenge a Goth camp. When the Goths saw this challenge, they immediately formed up and charged the Romans. Following Belisarius' strict orders of not engaging in close combat or getting cut off from a safe return route to Rome, the Roman Cavalry would let fly two or three volleys of arrows, thinning the Goth ranks, and then move off quickly with the surviving Goths in pursuit. Again, the Romans would halt and fire two or three volleys against the Goths, inflicting numerable Goth casualties, and move off. The Romans would continue this until the Goths gave up on the chase or the Goths would endanger the Roman's return route. Procopius relates that during the siege

there were 67 such sorties, and a good day for the Romans would include up to 2,000 Goth casualties.<sup>89</sup>

During the siege, the Goths would attempt to cut Rome off from its source of supply, the ports of Ostia, Portus, and Antium. However, the Goths were never able to complete a stranglehold on Rome due to Belisarius' active defense. As a key part of his operation, Belisarius would ensure at least one of the above ports and a supporting supply line was kept open at any one time. In contrast to the Goths, the Roman Navy, in an early form of joint operations, was beginning to enjoy success in cutting that part of Italy under Goth rule off from supplies, particularly food. The success of this Roman blockade would eventually play an important part in the Goth's defeat at the gates of Rome.

When the Goths had begun their siege on Rome, Belisarius was outnumbered thirty to one. To help offset this disadvantage, all male Roman citizens were immediately drafted by Belisarius. Again, the Household Cavalry of Belisarius was instrumental in training these recruits, not as cavalrymen, but as guards and archers on the circuit walls of Rome. Belisarius also continued correspondence with Justinian for more troops, but Justinian may have had an ulterior motive in being slow with providing his general with additional forces. Belisarius, as stated before, was too successful, too young, and too charismatic for Justinian to ever feel entirely secure in Belisarius' loyalty to the throne. One can infer that Justinian was holding back troops in the hope that Belisarius would encounter some setbacks that would

tarnish his image and reduce the possibility of Belisarius becoming a rival. Eventually, however, Justinian, seeing the futility of hoping for a setback for Belisarius, would send his general more than 2400 cavalry and 3500 infantry<sup>90</sup>.

The Goths were becoming decimated by combat, by disease, due to poor field sanitation, and by hunger, due in part to the Roman fleet's blockade. Witigis sought and received an armistice from Belisarius so that envoys could be sent to Justinian to establish peace. Belisarius used this pause to prepare the peninsula for future offensive operations. First, the Goths had emptied some northern garrisons in order to provide more troops for the siege of Rome. Belisarius sent detachments to seize these forts. Second, Belisarius sent one of his subordinates, John, with 2,000 cavalrymen on a raid into the Goth rear area. John exceeded his orders and fought his way to Rimini, 200 miles in the Goth rear and 33 miles from the Goth capital of Rimini. Third, Belisarius used the time to improve his logistical situation. One could argue that Belisarius broke the armistice by conducting the above military operations. He certainly violated the spirit of the accord, but technically, the armistice was for combat between the Goths and the Romans in the vicinity of Rome. The Goths did not think the small number of Romans would march and fight in other areas of the peninsula.

Witigis, realizing his broken army had no chance in taking Rome, and with the Romans seizing cities up and down Italy and threatening his capital, decided to withdraw back to Rimini.

To quote Norwich:

One early morning in the middle in March 538 his troops, sick, demoralized, and dispirited, methodically set fire to their seven camps around the city and headed northwards . . . . But even now their humiliation was not over: Belisarius and his men came pouring out of the gates, fell on them from behind and, after another engagement at the Milvian Bridge, left several hundred more Goths dead on the river banks or drowned<sup>91</sup>

Again, the above demonstrates Belisarius' Coup d'oeil; seeing the offering of the Goths isolated rear at a choke point, Belisarius timed his attack to cause the most damage with the least risk to his own troops. Also, Belisarius let the Goths move on peaceably after the raid on the rear of the line, following his dictum of "never rout a fugitive." Belisarius would never risk his own defeat by cornering an enemy in a battle of annihilation.

The defense of Rome was part of an integrated campaign plan that would reduce the Goths numbers and fighting spirit to a point that would allow the switch over to offensive operations for achieving the conquest of Italy. Considering that Belisarius originally moved into Rome with 5,000 troops and not only withstood, but defeated 150,000 Goth warriors, clearly demonstrates Belisarius' mastery of the art of war. Procopius relates that when Belisarius was asked why he was so confident of victory over the Goths:

That in engaging them at first with only a few men he had noticed just what the difference was between the two armies . . . and the difference was this, that practically all the Romans and their allies, the Huns, are good mounted bowmen, but not a man among the Goths has had practice in this branch, for their horsemen are accustomed to use only spears and swords. So the horsemen, unless the engagement is at close quarters, have no means of defending themselves against opponents who use the bow, and therefore can be easily reached by the arrows and destroyed; as for the foot soldiers, they can never be strong enough to make sallies

against men on horseback. It was for these reasons, Belisarius declared, that the barbarians had been defeated.<sup>92</sup>

Although the outcome of the Gothic Campaign would depend on far more than the cavalry's use of the bow, it is of importance to note that Belisarius immediately grasped the key of tactical success against the Goths and capitalized on it.

With the Goths on the run, Belisarius' campaign plan entered the tactical offensive phase. Belisarius' plan was first to clear the west coast of Italy of Goth strongholds, then move on Ravenna. However, Belisarius had one problem he wanted to put behind him. John, with 2,000 cavalrymen, was still in Rimini far behind Goth lines and could be trapped by the Goths. Belisarius sent messengers to John ordering him to abandon Rimini; however, John refused to leave his prize. John was in pursuit of personal glory and may have harbored the hope of taking Ravenna himself. To quote Norwich: "Belisarius was a supreme strategist and, thanks to his immense physical courage, a superb commander in the field. As a general, however, there was one quality that he lacked: the ability to inspire the unquestioning loyalty of those under him."<sup>93</sup> Notwithstanding John, Belisarius began operations in western Italy, while the Goths laid siege to Rimini in April 538.

Just as Belisarius began operations in the west, another army of about 7,000 troops under Justinian's other great general, Narses (who is considered by some even greater than Belisarius), arrived in Italy. Narses was the complete opposite of Belisarius. In his fiftieth year, he was a eunuch, a slightly

disfigured dwarf, and cerebral. Narses was Justinian's closest aide and a master of the Imperial Court's intrigues and bureaucracy. Justinian would put far more trust in Narses than Belisarius since Narses the Eunuch could never be a rival for the throne.

The arrival of Narses into theater proved a disaster for Belisarius. Narses was viewed as a real power broker in the Empire, a man of great influence with the throne. Belisarius was a mere general who was not particularly trusted by Justinian. Also, many of Belisarius' officers owed their wealth and position to the assistance of Narses. The presence of Narses in the theater split the loyalty of many of the officer corps away from Belisarius.

Immediately, Narses pushed matters with Belisarius. Narses demanded that the army mount an expedition to save John in Rimini. Belisarius refused, feeling that John had made his own bed and could sleep in it. An expedition to save John would detract from the methodical reduction of Goth strongholds in the west. When the officer corps sided with Narses and threatened to act independently to save John, Belisarius, in an effort to maintain some semblance of unity of command, agreed to the effort.

Belisarius' plan to save Rimini was a masterstroke of deception and psychological warfare. Having inferior numbers compared to the Goths at Rimini, Belisarius planned for a demonstration of force that would cause the Goths to flee without a fight. Belisarius broke his expedition into three columns,

each approaching from a different direction. Also, he arranged for the Roman Navy to appear offshore, synchronized with the arrival of the land forces. To quote Hart:

This advance from three directions was intended to give the Goths an exaggerated impression of his strength. To strengthen the impression, a far-stretched chain of camp-fires were lighted by night. The stratagem succeeded, helped by the fear which Belisarius' name now inspired, and the much larger Goth army bolted in panic on his approach.<sup>94</sup>

Through maneuver, deception, and psychological operations alone, and without a single causality, Belisarius had scored a victory against a superior force.

After the rescue of John, Belisarius continued his methodical reduction of Goth strongholds, moving ever closer to the final assault on Ravenna. Again, to quote Hart:

Belisarius now, while keeping watch over Witiges in Ravenna, planned to clear his communications with Rome by reducing the various fortresses that he had slipped past in his rapid advance. With such small numbers as he possessed this was not an easy problem, but his method was to isolate, and concentrate upon particular fortresses while using a far-flung curtain of mobile detachments to keep any potential relieving forces occupied in their own area.<sup>95</sup>

During this time the breach between Narses and Belisarius grew worse. As Narses began planning independent operations, Belisarius decided to exert his authority as the theater commander. At a council of war, Belisarius produced a letter from Justinian, as Procopius relates:

"We have not sent our steward Narses to Italy in order to command the whole army; for we wish Belisarius alone to command the whole army in whatever manner seems to him best, and it is the duty of all of you to follow him in the interest of the state." But Narses, laying hold of the final words of the letter, declared that Belisarius at the present time was laying plans contrary to the interest of the state; for this reason, he said, it was unnecessary for them to follow him.<sup>96</sup>

Although Belisarius would successfully conduct operations in spite of this independent Roman command, there were major consequences. When Milan was threatened with destruction by the Goths (who were angry at the inhabitants for siding with the Romans early in the war) and requested relief, Belisarius ordered nearby units to safeguard the city. However, the unit commanders refused to follow Belisarius' orders since they considered Narses their commander. By the time this dilemma was solved it was too late; the Goths took Milan and in one night slaughtered the male population of approximately 300,000,<sup>97</sup> in an act of barbaric vengeance. As a result of the worsening command situation and the destruction of Milan, Justinian recalled Narses with full honors.

In the meantime, Witigis, who watched his kingdom crumble around him, went through a learning curve and decided to take a page from Justinian's book. He sent envoys to the Franks and Persians, asking them to enter the war against the Romans. He explained to the Persians that with Justinian's success in Italy, and his already having won North Africa, the Eastern Roman Empire was gaining the resources to become a threat to Persia. Witigis explained it might be best to enter the war now, while so many Roman troops were tied up in Italy. The Persians would eventually invade the Empire, but not in time for Witigis. As for the Franks, they sent 100,000 men into northern Italy, attacking both Goth and Roman alike. But shortly after entering

the war, they succumbed to disease and lost 30,000 men. The Franks retreated from Italy having no real effect on the war.

When Justinian's extensive spy network caught wind of the message to the Persians, the informed Justinian began the process of concluding the war, sending envoys to negotiate terms with Witigis. Justinian offered to split the Peninsula between Witigis and himself, with the Goths to maintain control of Italy north of the Po River. As the Goth nobilities were mulling over Justinian's offer, they came upon one last idea to save the Ostrogoth Kingdom--to offer the crown of the Ostrogoths to Belisarius, who was now laying siege to Ravenna itself. To quote Bury:

The regime of Witigis had discredited Ostrogothic royalty, and they would feel no repugnance to submitting to the direct authority of a western Emperor residing at Rome or Ravenna, if that Emperor were Belisarius, whom they deeply respected both as soldier and a just man. They did not know his uncompromising loyalty or suspect that there was no role that seemed more thoroughly detestable to him than that of usurper.<sup>98</sup>

As always, Belisarius saw this turn of events as an opportunity; he could end the war quickly and avoid a long siege by having the gates of Ravenna opened for him without a fight. Belisarius expressed his interest to the Goth's envoys, but refused to announce his final decision on accepting the crown until he was in Ravenna at an assembly with the Goth nobility. The Goths thought it impossible for anyone to refuse such an offer and agreed to Belisarius' terms.

In May 540, the gates of Ravenna were thrown open to Belisarius, who marched in with his army, refused the Goth crown

and seized the Goth treasure and Witigis. Belisarius treated the Goth nobility with great respect and did not seize any private property. No Roman soldier was allowed to pillage or denigrate the Goths.

At this stage, the Gothic Campaign should have entered its final stage with the mop up of the few northern Goth garrisons still holding out. However, Justinian was furious with Belisarius. First, Belisarius had preempted the Emperor's negotiations (and authority) with the Goths, which would have been concluded if Belisarius did not undertake what the Goth's termed "The Great Refusal." Second, continuing fears about the loyalty of Belisarius to the throne were at a fever pitch. To quote Bury on Belisarius' conduct:

But his innocence of criminal disloyalty in thought or deed does not excuse his conduct. He was guilty of a flagrant violation of his promises to the Goths, and he was guilty of gross disobedience to the Emperor's orders. It was not the business of the commander-in-chief to decide the terms of peace; that was entirely a question for the Emperor. We can understand his unwillingness to allow the complete victory, which seemed within his grasp, to escape him; but it would be difficult to justify the chicanery which he employed at first in protracting the negotiations, and then in deceiving the enemy by pretended disloyalty to his master.<sup>99</sup>

One can read the above quotation and notice a similarity between this affair and the row between President Truman and General MacAuthur during the Korean War thirteen centuries later, with the theater commander believing that there was "no substitute for victory." The ideal solution may have been granting Belisarius full powers to negotiate, with the Emperor giving his commander in the field specific constraints and criteria to meet.

In 540, Belisarius was recalled to Constantinople by Justinian not only for the reasons listed above, but also due to the fact that the Persians were massing a large force on the frontier that threatened an invasion. Despite Justinian's problems with Belisarius, he needed his best general, the only Roman general available who had defeated the Persians before in a major battle.

When Belisarius left Italy, the Romans should have finished securing the peninsula within weeks. However, Justinian, fearful of the rise of a western Emperor from the officer ranks of the Roman army, split the command of Roman forces in Italy among eleven generals.<sup>100</sup> These generals would work against each other to such an extent that nearly everything Belisarius had accomplished in five years of campaigning would become moot. The Goths would regroup, first electing Hildebad, and later Totila as their king, with Totila nearly driving the Romans out completely.

A short analysis of this campaign shows that Belisarius' strategy and tactics throughout reinforce the pattern seen in other theaters. Belisarius followed his arch strategy of strategic offensive--tactical defensive--tactical offensive in the Gothic campaign. Through his mastery of the art and science of war, Belisarius adjusted his operation to suit the situation of the moment. As in his battle with the Persians previously, Belisarius capitalized on his superior technology of the bow to gain a major tactical advantage against his opponent. Also, deception played a greater role in this campaign than before.

The tactical action at Rimini approaches perfection in deception, while the refusal of the crown at Ravenna in order to end the war represents a singular achievement in generalship.

As to the competencies of Belisarius in applying his common techniques Norwich states:

There is no more convincing testimony to the brilliance of Belisarius than the collapse of Byzantine power in Italy after his departure.<sup>101</sup>

## CHAPTER 6

### FINAL BATTLES AND CONCLUSIONS

The general who advances without coveting fame and retreats without fearing disgrace, whose only thought is to protect his country and do good service for his sovereign, is the jewel of the kingdom.<sup>102</sup>

Sun Tzu, The Art of War

Upon Belisarius' return to Constantinople, he was immediately given command of forces on the Persian frontier. The Persian king Chosros had launched a major raid into the Empire with the objective being the sack of Jerusalem, third richest city of the Empire. Belisarius immediately determined that Chosros, due to the logistical considerations needed for the 200,000<sup>103</sup> troops under his command, had to follow the Euphrates River before turning on Jerusalem. Belisarius selected a location for his mobile army, probably numbering about 15,000 troops, just north of Chosros' route of march. Belisarius selected terrain that masked the true size of his force and sent out numerous patrols to give the Persians the impression that his force was actually much larger than it was. By choosing this masked location for his force, Belisarius had put the Persians in a dilemma. The Persians could not continue their advance, as Belisarius could sweep them from behind. If they tried to engage Belisarius, they could be cut off from their logistical support

on the Euphrates. If they split their large force to fight Belisarius and while continuing to Jerusalem, they might be defeated in detail. Compounding the Persian problem was the fact that they were facing Belisarius, the only Roman commander to beat them in a major action, conqueror of the Vandals and Goths. The Persians, recognizing their dilemma, stopped their march at Europum.<sup>104</sup> With mere movement to a critical point while masking his strength, Belisarius had halted a major invasion in its tracks.

Chosros sent an envoy to Belisarius' camp, under the pretense of peace negotiations, to scout the actual strength of the Romans. Belisarius, easily discerning the real reason for the envoy, staged a "play" for the envoy. To quote Hart:

[Belisarius] picked out the best of his own men. . .and moved to a point on the Persian envoy's route of approach, so that the latter might imagine that he had been met at what was one of the outposts of a great army. And the soldiers were instructed to spread out over the plain and kept in constant movement, so that to magnify their numbers. This impression was deepened by Belisarius' air of light hearted confidence and the care free behavior of the troops-as if they had nothing to fear from any possible attack. The envoy's report convinced Chosros that it was too hazardous to continue his invasion with so formidable a force on the flank of his communications. Then, by further confusing maneuvers of his cavalry along the Euphrates, Belisarius bluffed the Persians into making a hurried retreat across the river and then back home. Never was an invasion, potentially irresistible, more economically defeated.<sup>105</sup>

Thus, Belisarius had brought to near perfection the art of deception and maneuver. Again he had beaten the superior Persians, but this time he had not lost a single soldier.

In 544, Belisarius returned to Italy, on the orders of Justinian, in an attempt to salvage his previous gains. Totila,

King of the Goths and a brilliant leader, was on the verge of total victory. The few Roman troops that were left in Italy had not been paid in two years and were deserting to the Goths on a daily basis. Belisarius could not bring his Household Cavalry, as it was in the process of being disbanded. Theodora, always distrustful of Belisarius, had ordered this action as part of continuing plan to break the power of the general.<sup>106</sup> He was instead forced to pick up 4,000 recruits<sup>107</sup> in Thrace and Illyria. When Belisarius arrived in Italy, he found the Italians not supportive of his return. Italy was half starving, due to the years of warfare, and that portion of the peninsula that remained under Roman control was taxed out of all proportion. Also, Totila had successfully geared his campaign to win the 'hearts and minds' of the populace.<sup>108</sup>

Belisarius would spend the next four years in Italy, never having more than a few thousand troops available to him. Justinian refused to support his commander due to a lack of trust and an outbreak of plague that was decimating the Empire.<sup>109</sup> Although Belisarius would never lose a battle in Italy over those four years, he would never come close to securing the peninsula. For four years, Belisarius would, as Hart explains: "[conduct] a 'tip and run' campaign among the fortresses, and from port to port."<sup>110</sup> Belisarius' basically conducted a raiding strategy that bordered on guerrilla warfare. His objective was to ensure that Totila could not consolidate the peninsula. With so few troops available to him, and without his elite Household Cavalry, he was never able to face Totila on the field in a major battle.

Yet, this "unconventional" campaign was appropriate and a success. To quote Norwich:

Early in 549 Belisarius returned to the capital [Constantinople]. After the glory of his first Italian campaign, his second had brought him only five years of frustration and disappointment. But he had saved Italy, at least temporarily, for the Empire. Had it not been for his energy and resolve, in the face of the most discouraging conditions imaginable, there is little doubt that the Byzantines would have been expelled in 544; thanks to him the foundations for reconquest were laid for the second time, making it relatively easy when the moment came for his old rival[Narses]--possessed of all the resources for which he, Belisarius, had appealed in vain--to win the victories and the acclaim that should rightfully have been his own.<sup>111</sup>

In 558 Belisarius, who had been in forced retirement since his return from Italy, was recalled to active service to face the Bulgar Huns had organized under a new leader and, with 20,000 cavalry,<sup>112</sup> were headed along the relatively short distance from modern day Bulgaria to Constantinople. With the Huns approaching the walls of the city and no forces available to intercept them, Justinian ordered Belisarius to do something. This situation harks back to the Byzantine definition of strategy; at the time Roman forces were enjoying great success in Italy and Spain, yet the defense of the Empire was threatened by an immediate neighbor. Belisarius scoured the city and found three hundred of his old veterans which he organized into three companies. Additionally, he drafted about 1,000 refugees as infantry and moved out of the city to intercept the Huns. Belisarius planned an ambush at a small defile where the Huns could not maneuver or use their arrows effectively. Coming at the Huns in the defile from three directions, Belisarius routed

the advance guard of the Huns. The Hun survivors of the ambush fled back to the main body of Huns and convinced their countrymen to return home. This military action was Belisarius' last battle. He died in 565, with Justinian dying a few months later.

The purpose of this paper has been to discover the 'modus operandi' or common threads that ran through all of Belisarius' victories and the relevance to modern warfare. In the preface of this paper, a framework was outlined that would guide the analysis of Belisarius' modus operandi. Included in that framework is the evaluation of genius, the employment of resources, and techniques applied on the battlefield.

Clausewitz defines military genius as the balance of intelligence and character, tempered by self control.<sup>113</sup> Belisarius' exemplary character has been clearly demonstrated. First, his personal courage in the face danger verges on the superhuman. His personal charge into the Goths as they approached Rome, done in an effort to save a handful of his soldiers, clearly shows a disregard for his own life for the greater good of his army. Rather than belabor this point, Gibbon succinctly states:

In the more improved state of the art of war a general is seldom required, or even permitted, to display the personal prowess of a soldier, and the example of Belisarius may be added to the rare examples of Henry IV, of Pyrrhus, and of Alexander.<sup>114</sup>

In addition to courage, Belisarius' character reveals a man of high morals. This principled virtue of a general led to direct results on the battlefield. It was recognized by his soldiers, who never rebelled against him as was common in the

age. As has been shown, the Goths so respected Belisarius that they offered him their crown. This proposal was made because they knew Belisarius was a skilled general and just a man. Belisarius' loyalty and integrity compelled him to refuse an offer most men would have quickly accepted. His virtue also won the support of local populations in Italy and North Africa. Barbarians would usually treat captured populations harshly; through compassion Belisarius won their support. As a result, his forces gained great assistance in logistics, intelligence, and security.

As for his intellect, the great victories on three continents, attest to a man who could see the path to triumph while his opponents groped in the dark. At the Battle of Daras and during his final encounter with the Persians, his intellect and imagination were instrumental in forcing them to submit to his will. With the Goths, he was the master, having them maneuver in accordance with his desires. Needing to weaken the Goth strength and morale, he had them dash their army on the walls of Rome. Knowing their fears, his complex maneuvering, a product of his imagination, led to moving the superior Goth force away from Rimini. What follows below will highlight numerous other examples of his keen intellect.

Belisarius self-control and temperament were again best described by Gibbon:

amidst the perils of war he was daring without rashness, prudent without fear, slow or rapid according to the exigencies of the moment; that in the deepest distress he was animated by real or apparent hope, but that he was modest and humble in the most prosperous fortune.<sup>115</sup>

Gibbon's comment harks back to Procopius' description of Belisarius' demeanor on the walls of Rome when aides informed Belisarius that the Goths were in the city and begged him to flee. Instead, he coolly had the report verified before taking any action.

Belisarius' application of the forces under his command was demonstrated in several areas. First, Belisarius preferred smaller forces, or actually, correctly sized forces that were within the span of his control. Idle forces or forces that were acting independently left too much to chance events and could jeopardize a battle. Graves paraphrases Belisarius: "There are few generals capable of controlling forty thousand men in battle."<sup>116</sup> Belisarius knew arithmetically the limits of his generalship; to have additional forces would put a drag on his march rate and logistics. Uncommitted forces were susceptible to enemy attack that he could not directly and personally counter. This lack of personal control could lead to psychological shock and cause the ripple effect of panic that could spread to his whole force, and thus to defeat. With the Persians, Vandals, and Goths, Belisarius would apply his forces to induce panic as a combat multiplier to enhance maneuver. At Daras, his cavalry detachment's counterstrokes were designed to strike fear in the Persians and have them flee the field. The attacks had the exact effect he desired.

Strategic offensive--tactical defensive--tactical offensive is the key, overarching philosophy behind the major military operations of Belisarius. Clausewitz was to point out

centuries later that this was the superior form of war. This strategy flowed from Belisarius' knowledge and study of the art and science of war that was tied to the Greek tradition of education and philosophy. Through a studied approach to war, Belisarius would defeat superior, less sophisticated opponents who often counted on élan and brute force alone. This plan of war was well suited for his smaller, professional force.

Belisarius played a key role in designing and equipping forces that were superior to their opponents on the battlefield. Advantages in archery and armor provided a tactical advantage that could overcome his inferior numbers. As Belisarius stated, the superior Roman bow was the key to tactical success over the Goths. Belisarius adjusted his strategy and tactics in order to capitalize on this advantage of his forces.

Finally, Belisarius effectively employed elite forces to achieve victory. The Household Cavalry, Huns, and other superior troops used at critical points to turn the tide of battle, or to inspire and rally the regular forces. A key purpose of these forces, as seen at Daras, was to strike fear and panic in a foe and to begin to break their will. The Huns on the flank at Ad Decimum drove the superior Vandal force off the field and were key to Gelimer's plan of attack disintegrating. Like a chessmaster, Belisarius knew how to correctly employ each capability of his force.

Belisarius continuously applied specific battle techniques in his campaigns and battles to achieve victory. First, positive actions were taken to reduce "friction" and the

'fog of war'. Belisarius, during the Vandal campaign, could have blindly landed at Carthage and won through surprise. Instead he landed 160 miles away and marched to develop the situation on his terms and keep his options open. He demonstrated the modern day meeting engagement principle of making initial contact with the smallest possible force. To quote Belisarius, from Procopius: "For stupid daring leads to destruction, but discreet hesitation is well adapted always to save those who adopt such a course."<sup>117</sup> Strategically or tactically, he was never surprised in battle by his opponents. Belisarius always took concrete action to reduce the 'fog of war' for his forces and increase it for his opponents. He demonstrated that risk can be reduced by the commander's planning and actions.

Next, deception was instrumental to every operation. As Belisarius' career progressed, deception operations became an increasingly important factor in his plans. From capitalizing on his trenchworks at Daras, which led the Persians to split their cavalry, as he wanted them to, to his final battle with the Persians which was a pure deception operation, Belisarius' practice of the art of deception reflects his superb imagination and intellect.

Psychological activities were integrated in all operations. To quote Hart: "He knew how to provoke the barbarian armies of the West into indulging their natural instinct for direct assault."<sup>118</sup> Also, Belisarius would always allow his opponent an opportunity to escape; he never sought to annihilate a foe, only to seize a specific objective. An enemy

soldier facing Belisarius knew that if he lost to the general, the penalty would not be death or slavery, but respect and mercy. Here, the reputation of the general provided tangible results on the battlefield. As has been shown, Belisarius knew the keys to bending an enemy's will to his own.

Belisarius is one of history's great commanders. There is far more to his life and achievements than what has been highlighted on the preceding pages. Reflection on Belisarius' life and achievements will yield greater insights into the challenges and solutions of generalship. This paper opened with a quotation from Gibbon, and it may be appropriate to close with part of Gibbon's summation on Belisarius:

By these virtues he equaled or excelled the ancient masters of the military art. Victory, by sea and land, attended his arms. He subdued Africa, Italy, and the adjacent islands; led away captives and filled Constantinople with the spoils of their palaces; and in the space of six years recovered half the provinces of the Western Empire. In his fame and merit, in wealth and power, he remained without a rival, the first of Roman subjects: the voice of envy could only magnify his dangerous importance, and the emperor might applaud his own discerning spirit, which had discovered and raised the genius of Belisarius.<sup>119</sup>

## ENDNOTES

### Preface

<sup>1</sup>Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. II (New York: The Modern Library, 1781, 586. The omitted portion of the quotation is as follows:

"Leonidas and his three hundred companions devoted their lives at Thermopylea; but the education of the infant, the boy, and the man, had prepared and almost ensured this memorable sacrifice; and each Spartan would approve, rather than admire, and act of duty, of which himself and eight thousand of his fellow-citizens were equally capable. The great Pompey might inscribe on his tros, and reduced fifteen hundred cities from the lake Maeotis to the Red Sea; but the fortune of Rome flew before his eagles; the nations were oppressed by their own fears; and the invincible legions which he commanded had been formed by the habits of conquest and the discipline of ages."

<sup>2</sup>Hans Delbruck, The Barbarian Invasions, trans. by Walter J. Renfroe (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1980), 340.

### Chapter 1

<sup>3</sup>Justinian, from the Introduction to his Sixth Century Digest, the second portion of the Corpus Juris Civilis reprinted from John J. Norwich, Byzantium. The Early Centuries (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 181.

<sup>4</sup>Robert Graves, Count Belisarius (New York: Random House, 1938), 92.

<sup>5</sup>Isaac Asimov, Constantinople: The Forgotten Empire (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970), 55.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., paraphrase of concepts over several pages. The goals listed are clear if one reviews Justinian's life work; what he commanded and what he applied resources toward.

<sup>7</sup>Michael H. Hart, The 100 A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History (New York: A & W Visual Library, 1978), 497.

<sup>8</sup>Isaac Asimov, Constantinople: The Forgotten Empire (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970), 46.

<sup>9</sup>Procopius, Anecdota (also known as the Secret History) Translated by H. B. Dewing (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), chapter IX.

<sup>10</sup>Matthew Bunson, Encyclopedia of the Roman Empire (New York: Facts On File, Inc. 1994), 4.

<sup>11</sup>Robert Graves, Count Belisarius (New York: Random House, 1938), 92.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 81.

<sup>13</sup>Lawerence Fauber, Narses, Hammer of the Goths (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1990), 190.

<sup>14</sup>Procopius, History of the Wars, Vol. I trans. H. B. Dewing (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 101.

<sup>15</sup>Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire Vol. II (New York: The Modern Library, 1781), 586.

## Chapter 2

<sup>16</sup>Lawrence Fauber, Narses: Hammer of the Goths (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 187.

<sup>17</sup>John Norwich, Byzantium. The Early Centuries (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 207.

<sup>18</sup>Lawrence Fauber, Narses: Hammer of the Goths (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 189.

<sup>19</sup>J. B. Bury, History of the Later Roman Empire Vol. II, (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), 78.

<sup>20</sup>Lawrence Fauber, Narses: Hammer of the Goths (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 187.

<sup>21</sup>Glanville Downey, Constantinople in the Age of Justinian (New York: Dorset Press, 1960), 82.

<sup>22</sup>Peter Llewellyn, Rome in the Dark Ages (New York: Dorset Press, 1993), 53.

<sup>23</sup>Three Byzantine Military Treatises trans. George T. Dennis, (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1985), 21.

<sup>24</sup>Carl Von Clausewitz, On War ed. and trans., Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 128.

<sup>25</sup>Department of the Army, FM 100-5. Operations (Washington D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1993), G-8.

<sup>26</sup>Three Byzantine Military Treatises trans. George T. Dennis (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1985 ), 45.

<sup>27</sup>Carl Von Clausewitz, On War ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 128.

<sup>28</sup>Department of the Army, FM 100-5. Operations (Washington D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1993), G-8.

### Chapter 3

<sup>29</sup>Procopius, History of the Wars, Anecdota trans. H. B. Dewing, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 129.

<sup>30</sup>Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire Vol. II, (New York: The Modern Library, 1781), 558.

<sup>31</sup>Robert Graves, Count Belisarius (New York: Random House, 1938), 138.

<sup>32</sup>Procopius, History of the Wars, Vol. I trans. H. B. Dewing, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 105.

<sup>33</sup>Robert Graves, Count Belisarius (New York: Random House, 1938), 22.

<sup>34</sup>As an interesting note, the West Point Military History Series, Ancient and Medieval Warfare Thomas E. Griess, Series Editor, (Wayne: Avery Publishing Group, 1984), states on page 94, "the Persian Commander, whose name historians have compassionately neglected to record . . ." Procopius clearly states throughout his narrative of the battle that the Persian Commander's name is Perozes.

<sup>35</sup>Procopius, History of the Wars, Vol. I Translated by H. B. Dewing, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 109.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 113.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 129.

<sup>38</sup>Carl Von Clausewitz, On War (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 370.

<sup>39</sup>Procopius, History of the Wars, Vol. I trans. H. B. Dewing, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 165.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 175.

#### Chapter 4

<sup>41</sup>J. B. Bury, The History of the Later Roman Empire (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), 26.

<sup>42</sup>Procopius, History of the Wars, Vol. I trans. H. B. Dewing, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 233.

<sup>43</sup>J. B. Bury, The History of the Later Roman Empire (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), 47.

<sup>44</sup>Procopius, History of the Wars, Vol. III trans. H. B. Dewing, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 53. Bury believes this number was actually 40,000, while Hart uses the number 100,000.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 53.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 99.

<sup>47</sup>J. B. Bury, The History of the Later Roman Empire (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), 127.

<sup>48</sup>Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. II (New York: Modern Library, 1781), 581.

<sup>49</sup>Procopius, History of the Wars, Vol. III trans. H. B. Dewing, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 137.

<sup>50</sup>John Norwich, Byzantium, The Early Centuries (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 209.

<sup>51</sup>Procopius, History of the Wars, Vol. III trans. H. B. Dewing, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 163.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 157. Bury concurs with this assessment.

<sup>53</sup>John Norwich, Byzantium, The Early Centuries (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 209.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 159.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 169.

<sup>56</sup>Procopius, History of the Wars, Vol. IV trans.  
H. B. Dewing, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 213.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 215, 217.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 229.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 231.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 233.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 283.

### Chapter 5

<sup>62</sup>Three Byzantine Military Treatises trans. George T. Dennis, (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1985), 21.

<sup>63</sup>John Julius Norwich, Byzantium. The Early Centuries (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 212.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 213.

<sup>65</sup>V. Vuksic and Z. Grbasic, Cavalry. The History of a Fighting Elite (London: Cassell Publishing, 1993), 54.

<sup>66</sup>J. B. Bury, History of the Later Roman Empire, Vol. II (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), 169.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 171.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 171.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 170.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 170.

<sup>71</sup>John Julius Norwich, Byzantium. The Early Centuries (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 215.

<sup>72</sup>Procopius, History of the Wars, Vol. V - VI.15 trans. H. B. Dewing, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 47.

<sup>73</sup>J. B. Bury, History of the Later Roman Empire, Vol. II (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), 175.

<sup>74</sup>Procopius, History of the Wars, Vol. V - VI.15 trans. H. B. Dewing, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 65.

<sup>75</sup>Lawrence Fauber, Narses: Hammer of the Goths (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 43.

<sup>76</sup>Robert Graves, Count Belisarius (New York: Random House, 1938), 298.

<sup>77</sup>J. B. Bury, History of the Later Roman Empire, Vol. II (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), 176.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 177.

<sup>79</sup>Procopius, History of the Wars, Vol. V - VI.15 trans. by H. B. Dewing, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 103.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 147.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 161.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 179.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 183.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., 211.

<sup>85</sup>Robert Graves, Count Belisarius (New York: Random House, 1938), 80.

<sup>86</sup>Carl Von Clausewitz, On War ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 102.

<sup>87</sup>Procopius, History of the Wars, Vol. V - VI.15 trans. H. B. Dewing, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 227.

<sup>88</sup>Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. II (New York: Modern Library, 1781), 567.

<sup>89</sup>Procopius, History of the Wars, Vol. V - VI.15 trans. H. B. Dewing, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 307.

<sup>90</sup>John Julius Norwich, Byzantium. The Early Centuries (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 218.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 219.

<sup>92</sup>Procopius, History of the Wars, Vol. V - VI.15 trans. H. B. Dewing, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 261.

<sup>93</sup>John Julius Norwich, Byzantium. The Early Centuries (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 222.

<sup>94</sup>B. H. Liddell Hart, Strategy (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), 47.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 47.

<sup>96</sup>Procopius, History of the Wars, Vol. VI.16 - VII.35 trans. H. B. Dewing, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 27.

<sup>97</sup>J. B. Bury, History of the Later Roman Empire, Vol. II (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), 175.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 212.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 214.

<sup>100</sup>Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. II (New York: Modern Library, 1781), 631.

<sup>101</sup>John Julius Norwich, Byzantium, The Early Centuries (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 235.

## Chapter 6

<sup>102</sup>Sun Tzu, The Art of War ed. by James Clavell, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), ch. 10, axiom 24.

<sup>103</sup>B. H. Liddell Hart, Strategy (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1954), 48.

<sup>104</sup>Procopius, History of the Wars, Vol. II trans. H. B. Dewing, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 439.

<sup>105</sup>B. H. Liddell Hart, Strategy (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1954), 49.

<sup>106</sup>Robert Browning, Justinian and Theodora (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1987), 122.

<sup>107</sup>J. B. Bury, History of the Later Roman Empire (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), 234.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., 231.

<sup>109</sup>Robert Browning, Justinian and Theodora (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1987), 120.

<sup>110</sup>B. H. Liddell Hart, Strategy (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1954), 50.

<sup>111</sup>John Norwich, Byzantium, The Early Centuries (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 244.

<sup>112</sup>Robert Graves, Count Belisarius (New York: Random House, 1938), 329.

<sup>113</sup>Carl Von Clausewitz, On War ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 100.

<sup>114</sup>Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. II (New York: Modern Library, 1781), 564.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., 581.

<sup>116</sup>Robert Graves, Count Belisarius (New York: Random House, 1938), 142.

<sup>117</sup>Procopius, History of the Wars, Vol. II trans. H. B. Dewing, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 421.

<sup>118</sup>B. H. Liddell Hart, Strategy (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1954), 52.

<sup>119</sup>Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. II (New York: Modern Library, 1781), 581.

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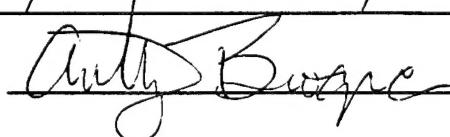
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